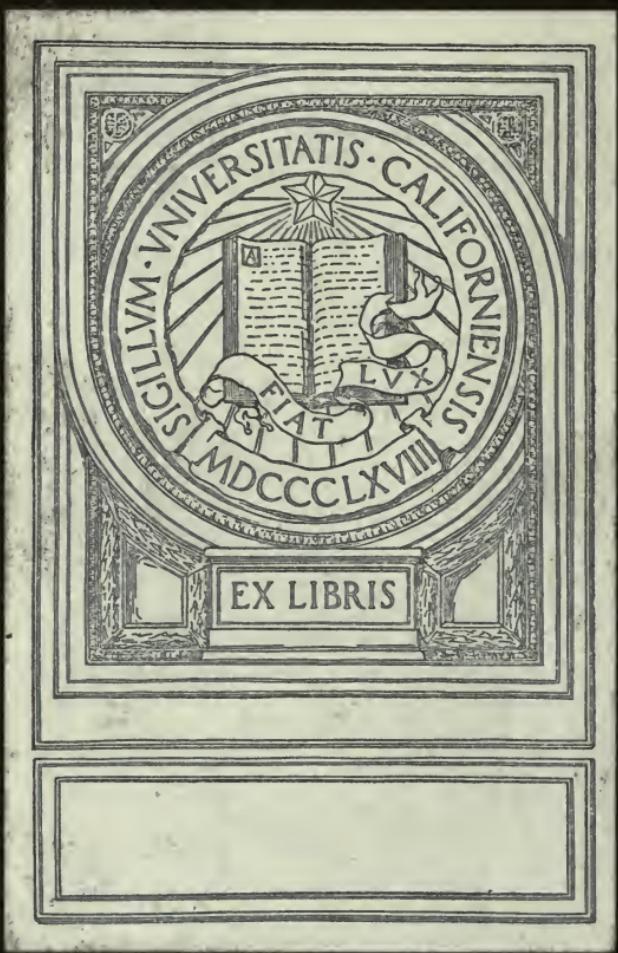
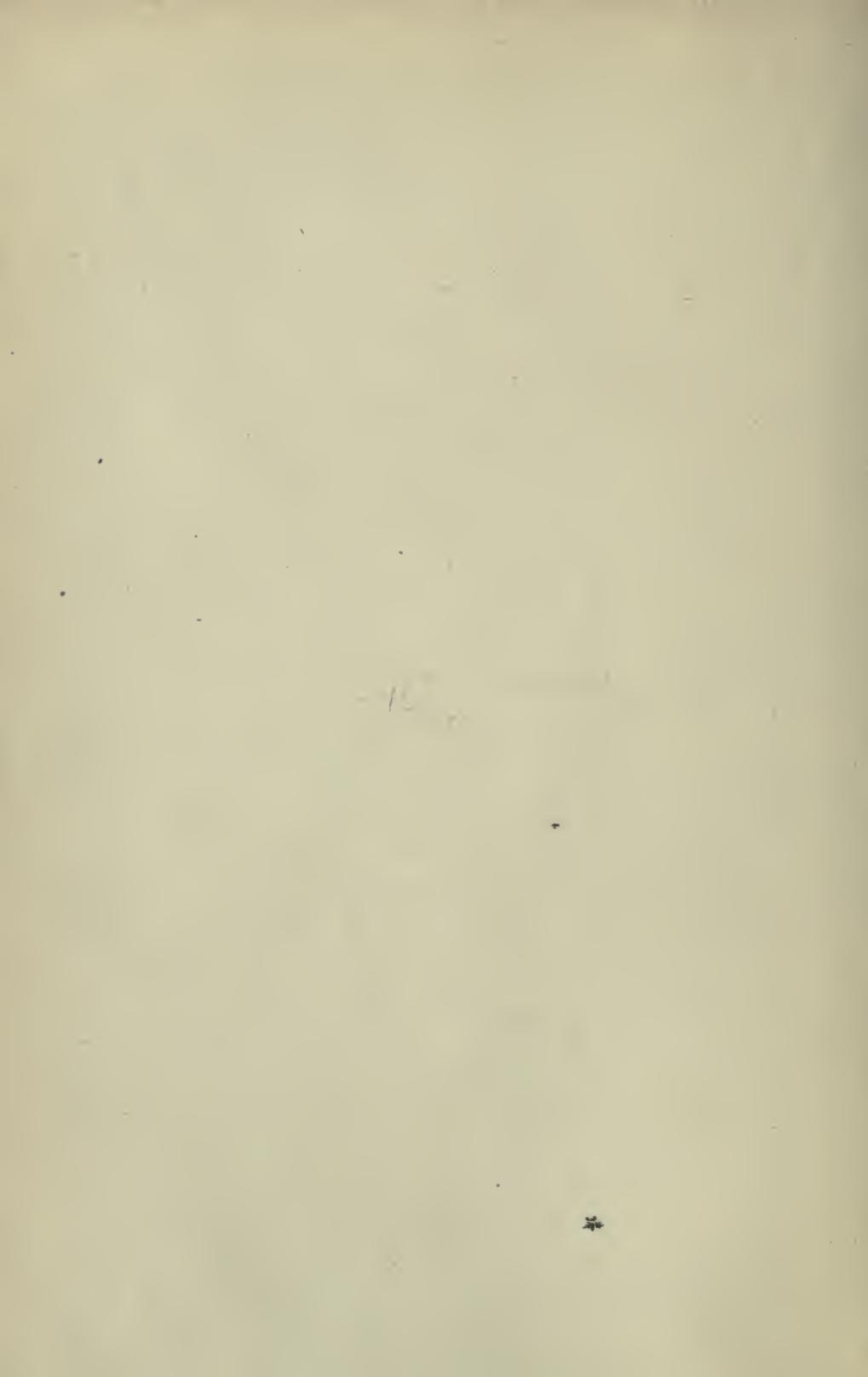


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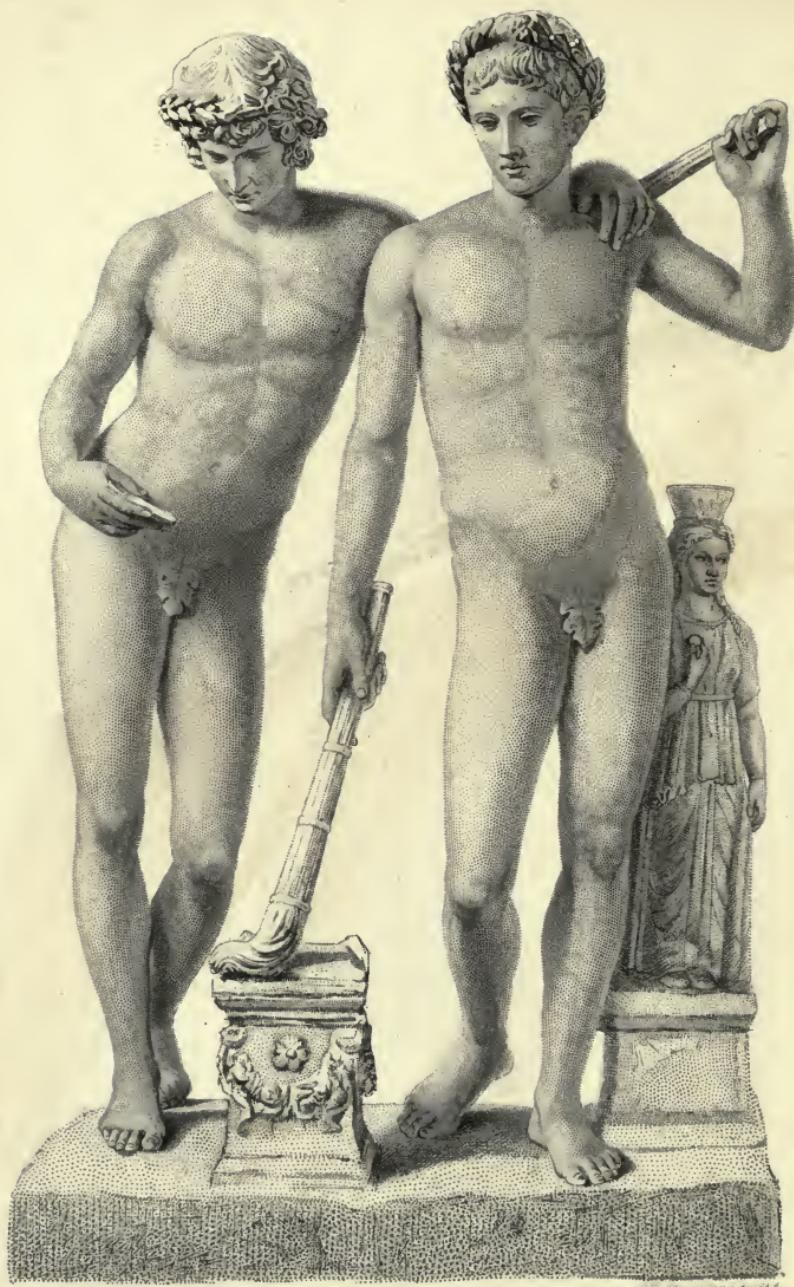




SKETCHES AND STUDIES
IN ITALY



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SKETCHES AND STUDIES IN ITALY

BY

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS

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WITH A FRONTISPICE

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These Studies and Sketches are reprinted in a great measure from the 'Fortnightly Review' and the 'Cornhill Magazine.' In preparing them for the press I have been unable, owing to my distance from all libraries of reference, to give them the final benefit of verification in minor details. I trust that in cases of discovered inaccuracy this admission may serve me in stead of further apology.

DAVOS PLATZ:
January 1879.

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H. F. B.

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Errata.

Page 121, line 5, *for* 1233 *read* 1253.
" 122, " 26, " 1283 " 1293.

SKETCHES AND STUDIES IN ITALY.

AMALFI, PÆSTUM, CAPRI.

THE road between Vietri and Amalfi is justly celebrated as one of the most lovely pieces of coast scenery in Italy. Its only rivals are the roads from Castellammare to Sorrento, from Genoa to Sestri, and from Nice to Mentone. Each of these has its own charm ; and yet their similarity is sufficient to invite comparison : under the spell of each in turn, we are inclined to say, This then, at all events, is the most beautiful. On first quitting Vietri, Salerno is left low down upon the sea-shore, nestling into a little corner of the bay which bears its name, and backed up by gigantic mountains. With each onward step these mountain-ranges expand in long aerial line, revealing reaches of fantastic peaks, that stretch away beyond the plain of Pæstum, till they end at last in mist and sunbeams shimmering on the sea. On the left hand hangs the cliff above the deep salt water, with here and there a fig-tree spreading fanlike leaves against the blue beneath. On the right rises the hill-side, clothed with myrtle, lentisk, cistus, and pale yellow coronilla—a tangle as sweet with scent as it is gay with blossom. Over the parapet that skirts the precipice lean heavy-foliaged locust-trees, and the terraces in sunny nooks are set with lemon-orchards. There are but few olives, and no pines. Meanwhile each turn in the road brings some change of scene—now a

village with its little beach of grey sand, lapped by clearest sea-waves, where bare-legged fishermen mend their nets, and naked boys bask like lizards in the sun—now towering bastions of weird rock, broken into spires and pinnacles like those of Skye, and coloured with bright hues of red and orange—then a ravine, where the thin thread of a mountain streamlet seems to hang suspended upon ferny ledges in the limestone—or a precipice defined in profile against sea and sky, with a lad, half dressed in goat-skin, dangling his legs into vacuity and singing—or a tract of cultivation, where the orange, apricot, and lemon-trees nestle together upon terraces with intermingled pergolas of vines.

Amalfi and Atrani lie close together in two of these ravines, the mountains almost arching over them, and the sea washing their very house-walls. Each has its crowning campanile ; but that of Amalfi is the stranger of the two, like a Moorish tower at the top, and coloured with green and yellow tiles that glitter in the sunlight. The houses are all dazzling white, plastered against the naked rock, rising on each other's shoulders to get a glimpse of earth and heaven, jutting out on coigns of vantage from the toppling cliff, and pierced with staircases as dark as night at noonday. Some frequented lanes lead through the basements of these houses ; and as the donkeys pick their way from step to step in the twilight, bare-chested macaroni-makers crowd forth like ants to see us strangers pass. A myriad of swallows or a swarm of mason bees might build a town like this.

It is not easy to imagine the time when Amalfi and Atrani were one town, with docks and arsenals and harbourage for their associated fleets, and when these little communities were second in importance to no naval power of Christian Europe. The Byzantine Empire lost its hold on Italy during the eighth century ; and after this time the history of Calabria is mainly concerned with the republics of Naples and Amalfi, their

conflict with the Lombard dukes of Benevento, their opposition to the Saracens, and their final subjugation by the Norman conquerors of Sicily. Between the year 839 A.D., when Amalfi freed itself from the control of Naples and the yoke of Benevento, and the year 1131, when Roger of Hauteville incorporated the republic in his kingdom of the Two Sicilies, this city was the foremost naval and commercial port of Italy. The burghers of Amalfi elected their own doge ; founded the Hospital of Jerusalem, whence sprang the knightly order of S. John ; gave their name to the richest quarter in Palermo ; and owned trading establishments or factories in all the chief cities of the Levant. Their gold coinage of *tari* formed the standard of currency before the Florentines had stamped the lily and S. John upon the Tuscan florin. Their shipping regulations supplied Europe with a code of maritime laws. Their scholars, in the darkest depth of the dark ages, prized and conned a famous copy of the Pandects of Justinian ; and their seamen deserved the fame of having first used, if they did not actually invent, the compass.

To modern visitors those glorious centuries of Amalfitan power and independence cannot but seem fabulous ; so difficult is it for us to imagine the conditions of society in Europe when a tiny city, shut in between barren mountains and a tideless sea, without a circumjacent territory, and with no resources but piracy or trade, could develop maritime supremacy in the Levant and produce the first fine flowers of liberty and culture.

If the history of Amalfi's early splendour reads like a brilliant legend, the story of its premature extinction has the interest of a tragedy. The republic had grown and flourished on the decay of the Greek Empire. When the hard-handed race of Hauteville absorbed the heritage of Greeks and Lombards and Saracens in Southern Italy, these adventurers succeeded in annexing Amalfi. But it was not their interest to extinguish

the state. On the contrary, they relied for assistance upon the navies and the armies of the little commonwealth. New powers had meanwhile arisen in the North of Italy, who were jealous of rivalry upon the open seas ; and when the Neapolitans resisted King Roger in 1135, they called Pisa to their aid, and sent her fleet to destroy Amalfi. The ships of Amalfi were on guard with Roger's navy in the Bay of Naples. The armed citizens were, under Roger's orders, at Aversa. Meanwhile the home of the republic lay defenceless on its mountain-girdled seaboard. The Pisans sailed into the harbour, sacked the city, and carried off the famous Pandects of Justinian as a trophy. Two years later they returned, to complete the work of devastation. Amalfi never recovered from the injuries and the humiliation of these two attacks. It was ever thus that the Italians, like the children of the dragon's teeth which Cadmus sowed, consumed each other. Pisa cut the throat of her sister-port Amalfi, and Genoa gave a mortal wound to Pisa, when the waters of Meloria were dyed with blood in 1284. Venice fought a duel to the death with Genoa in the succeeding century ; and what Venice failed to accomplish was completed by Milan and the lords of the Visconti dynasty, who crippled and enslaved the haughty queen of the Ligurian Riviera.

The naval and commercial prosperity of Amalfi was thus put an end to by the Pisans in the twelfth century. But it was not then that the town assumed its present aspect. What surprises the student of history more than anything is the total absence of fortifications, docks, arsenals, and breakwaters, bearing witness to the ancient grandeur of a city which numbered 50,000 inhabitants, and traded with Alexandria, Syria, and the far East. Nothing of the sort, with the exception of a single solitary tower upon the Monte Aureo, is visible. Nor will he fail to remember that Amalfi and Atrani, which are now divided by a jutting mountain buttress, were once joined by a tract of sea-beach, where the galleys of the republic rested

after sweeping the Levant, and where the fishermen drew up their boats upon the smooth grey sand. That also has disappeared. The violence of man was not enough to reduce Amalfi to its present state of insignificance. The forces of nature aided—partly by the gradual subsidence of the land, which caused the lower quarters of the city to be submerged, and separated Amalfi from her twin-port by covering the beach with water—partly by a fearful tempest, accompanied by earthquake, in 1343. Petrarch, then resident at Naples, witnessed the destructive fury of this great convulsion, and the description he wrote of it soon after its occurrence is so graphic that some notice may well be taken of it here.

His letter, addressed to the noble Roman, Giovanni Colonna, begins with a promise to tell something of a storm which deserved the title of ‘poetic,’ and in a degree so superlative that no epithet but ‘Homeric’ would suffice to do it justice. This exordium is singularly characteristic of Petrarch, who never forgot that he was a literary man, and lost no opportunity of dragging the great names of antiquity into his rhetorical compositions. The catastrophe was hardly unexpected ; for it had been prophesied by an astrological bishop, whom Petrarch does not name, that Naples would be overwhelmed by a terrible disaster in December 1343. The people were therefore in a state of wild anxiety, repenting of their sins, planning a total change of life under the fear of imminent death, and neglecting their ordinary occupations. On the day of the predicted calamity women roamed in trembling crowds through the streets, pressing their babies to their breasts, and besieging the altars of the saints with prayers. Petrarch, who shared the general disquietude, kept watching the signs of the weather ; but nothing happened to warrant an extraordinary panic. At sunset the sky was quieter than usual ; and he could discern none of the symptoms of approaching tempest, to which his familiarity with the mountains of Vaucluse

accustomed him. After dusk he stationed himself at a window to observe the moon until she went down, before midnight, obscured by clouds. Then he betook himself to bed ; but scarcely had he fallen into his first sleep when a most horrible noise aroused him. The whole house shook ; the night-light on his table was extinguished ; and he was thrown with violence from his couch. He was lodging in a convent ; and soon after this first intimation of the tempest he heard the monks calling to each other through the darkness. From cell to cell they hurried, the ghastly gleams of lightning falling on their terror-stricken faces. Headed by the Prior, and holding crosses and relics of the saints in their hands, they now assembled in Petrarch's chamber. Thence they proceeded in a body to the chapel, where they spent the night in prayer and expectation of impending ruin. It would be impossible, says the poet, to relate the terrors of that hellish night—the deluges of rain, the screaming of the wind, the earthquake, the thunder, the howling of the sea, and the shrieks of agonising human beings. All these horrors were prolonged, as though by some magician's spell, for what seemed twice the duration of a natural night. It was so dark that at last by conjecture rather than the testimony of their senses they knew that day had broken. A hurried mass was said. Then, as the noise in the town above them began to diminish, and a confused clamour from the sea-shore continually increased, their suspense became unendurable. They mounted their horses, and descended to the port—to see and perish. A fearful spectacle awaited them. The ships in the harbour had broken their moorings, and were crashing helplessly together. The strand was strewn with mutilated corpses. The breakwaters were submerged, and the sea seemed gaining momently upon the solid land. A thousand watery mountains surged up into the sky between the shore and Capri ; and these massive billows were not black or purple, but hoary with a livid foam. After describing some picturesque episodes—such as the

gathering of the knights of Naples to watch the ruin of their city, the procession of court ladies headed by the queen to implore the intercession of Mary, and the wreck of a vessel freighted with 400 convicts bound for Sicily—Petrarch concludes with a fervent prayer that he may never have to tempt the sea, of whose fury he had seen so awful an example.

The capital on this occasion escaped the ruin prophesied. But Amalfi was inundated ; and what the waters then gained has never been restored to man. This is why the once so famous city ranks now upon a level with quiet little towns whose names are hardly heard in history—with San Remo, or Rapallo, or Chiavari—and yet it is still as full of life as a wasp's nest, especially upon the molo, or raised piazza paved with bricks, in front of the Albergo de' Cappuccini. The changes of scene upon this tiny square are so frequent as to remind one of a theatre. Looking down from the inn-balcony, between the glazy green pots gay with scarlet amaryllis-bloom, we are inclined to fancy that the whole has been prepared for our amusement. In the morning the corn for the macaroni-flour, after being washed, is spread out on the bricks to dry. In the afternoon the fishermen bring their nets for the same purpose. In the evening the city magnates promenade and whisper. Dark-eyed women, with orange or crimson kerchiefs for head-gear, cross and re-cross, bearing baskets on their shoulders. Great lazy large-limbed fellows, girt with scarlet sashes and finished off with dark blue nightcaps (for a contrast to their saffron-coloured shirts, white breeches, and sunburnt calves) slouch about or sleep face downwards on the parapets. On either side of this same molo stretches a miniature beach of sand and pebble, covered with nets, which the fishermen are always mending, and where the big boats lade or unlade, trimming for the sardine fishery, or driving in to shore with a whirr of oars and a jabber of discordant voices. As the land-wind freshens, you may watch them set off one by one, like

pigeons taking flight, till the sea is flecked with twenty sail all scudding in the same direction. The torrent runs beneath the molo, and finds the sea beyond it ; so that here too are the washerwomen, chattering like sparrows ; and everywhere the naked boys, like brown sea-urchins, burrow in the clean warm sand, or splash the shallow brine. If you like the fun, you may get a score of them to dive together and scramble for coppers in the deeper places, their lithe bodies gleaming wan beneath the water in a maze of interlacing arms and legs.

Over the whole busy scene rise the grey hills, soaring into blueness of air-distance, turreted here and there with ruined castles, capped with particoloured campanili and white convents, and tufted through their whole height with the orange and the emerald of the great tree-spurge, and with the live gold of the blossoming broom. It is difficult to say when this picture is most beautiful—whether in the early morning, when the boats are coming back from their night-toil upon the sea, and along the headlands in the fresh light lie swathes of fleecy mist, betokening a still, hot day—or at noon tide, when the houses on the hill stand, tinted pink and yellow, shadowless like gems, and the great caruba-trees above the tangles of vines and figs are blots upon the steady glare—or at sunset, when violet and rose, reflected from the eastern sky, make all these terraces and peaks translucent with a wondrous glow. The best of all, perhaps, is night, with a full moon hanging high overhead. Who shall describe the silhouettes of boats upon the shore or sleeping on the misty sea? On the horizon lies a dusky film of brownish golden haze, between the moon and the glimmering water ; and here and there a lamp or candle burns with a deep red. Then is the time to take a boat and row upon the bay, or better, to swim out into the waves and trouble the reflections from the steady stars. The mountains, clear and calm, with light-irradiated chasms and hard shadows cast upon the rock, soar up above a city built of

alabaster, or sea-foam, or summer clouds. The whole is white and wonderful: no similes suggest an analogue for the lustre, solid and transparent, of Amalfi nestling in moonlight between the grey-blue sea and lucid hills. Stars stand on all the peaks, and twinkle, or keep gliding, as the boat moves, down the craggy sides. Stars are mirrored on the marble of the sea, until one knows not whether the oar has struck sparks from a star image or has scattered diamonds of phosphorescent brine.

All this reads like a rhapsody; but indeed it is difficult not to be rhapsodical when a May night of Amalfi is in the memory, with the echo of rich baritone voices chanting Neapolitan songs to a mandoline. It is fashionable to complain that these Italian airs are opera-tunes; but this is only another way of saying that the Italian opera is the genuine outgrowth of national melody, and that Weber was not the first, as some German critics have supposed, to string together Volkslieder for the stage. Northerners, who have never seen or felt the beauty of the South, talk sad nonsense about the superiority of German over Italian music. It is true that much Italian music is out of place in Northern Europe, where we seem to need more travail of the intellect in art. But the Italians are rightly satisfied with such facile melody and such simple rhythms as harmonise with sea and sky and boon earth sensuously beautiful. ‘Perchè pensa? Pensando s’invecchia,’ expresses the same habit of mind as another celebrated saying, ‘La musica è il lamento dell’ amore o la preghiera agli Dei.’ Whatever may be the value of Italian music, it is in concord with such a scene as Amalfi by moonlight; and he who does not appreciate this no less than some more artificial combination of sights and sounds in Wagner’s theatre at Bayreuth, has scarcely learned the first lesson in the lore of beauty.

There is enough and to spare for all tastes at Amalfi. The

student of architecture may spend hours in the Cathedral, pondering over its high-built western front, and wondering whether there is more of Moorish or of Gothic in its delicate arcades. The painter may transfer its campanile, glittering like dragon's scales, to his canvas. The lover of the picturesque will wander through its aisle at mass-time, watching the sunlight play upon those upturned Southern faces with their ardent eyes ; and happy is he who sees young men and maidens on Whit-Sunday crowding round the chancel rails, to catch the marigolds and gillyflowers scattered from baskets which the priest has blessed. Is this a symbol of the Holy Spirit's gifts, or is it some quaint relic of Pagan *sparsiones*? This question, with the memory of Pompeian *graffiti* in our mind, may well suggest itself in Southern Italy, where old and new faiths are so singularly blended. Then there is Ravello on the hills above. The path winds upward between stone-walls tufted with maidenhair ; and ever nearer grow the mountains, and the sea-line soars into the sky. An Englishman has made his home here in a ruined Moorish villa, with cool colonnaded cloisters and rose-embowered terraces, lending far prospect over rocky hills and olive-girdled villages to Pæstum's plain. The churches of Ravello have rare mosaics, and bronze doors, and marble pulpits, older perhaps than those of Tuscany, which tempt the archæologist to ask if Nicholas the Pisan learned his secret here. But who cares to be a sober antiquary at Amalfi? Far pleasanter is it to climb the staircase to the Capuchins, and linger in those caverns of the living rock, and pluck the lemons hanging by the mossy walls ; or to row from cove to cove along the shore, watching the fishes swimming in the deeps beneath, and the medusas spreading their filmy bells ; to land upon smooth slabs of rock, where corallines wave to and fro ; or to rest on samphire-tufted ledges, when the shadows slant beneath the westerling sun.

There is no point in all this landscape which does not make a picture. Painters might even complain that the pictures are too easy and the poetry too facile, just as the musicians find the melodies of this fair land too simple. No effect, carefully sought and strenuously seized, could enhance the mere beauty of Amalfi bathed in sunlight. You have only on some average summer day to sit down and paint the scene. Little scope is afforded for suggestions of far-away weird thoughts, or for elaborately studied motives. Daubigny and Corot are as alien here as Blake or Dürer.

What is wanted, and what no modern artist can successfully recapture from the wasteful past, is the mythopœic sense—the apprehension of primeval powers akin to man, growing into shape and substance on the borderland between the world and the keen human sympathies it stirs in us. Greek mythology was the proper form of art for scenery like this. It gave the final touch to all its beauties, and added to its sensuous charm an inbreathed spiritual life. No exercise of the poetic faculty, far less that metaphysical mood of the reflective consciousness which ‘leads from nature up to nature’s God,’ can now supply this need. From sea and earth and sky, in those creative ages when the world was young, there leaned to greet the men whose fancy made them, forms imagined and yet real—human, divine—the archetypes and everlasting patterns of man’s deepest sense of what is wonderful in nature. Feeling them there, for ever there, inalienable, ready to start forth and greet successive generations—as the Hamadryad greeted Rhaicos from his father’s oak—those mythopoets called them by immortal names. All their pent-up longings, all passions that consume, all aspirations that inflame—the desire for the impossible, which is disease, the day-dreams and visions of the night, which are spontaneous poems—were thus transferred to nature, And nature, responsive to the soul that loves her, gave them back transfigured and translated into radiant beings of like sub-

stance with mankind. It was thus, we feel, upon these southern shores that the gods of Greece came into being. The statues in the temples were the true fine flower of all this beauty, the culmination of the poetry which it evoked in hearts that feel and brains that think.

In Italy, far more than in any other part of Europe, the life of the present is imposed upon the strata of successive past lives. Greek, Latin, Moorish, and mediæval civilisations have arisen, flourished, and decayed on nearly the same soil ; and it is common enough to find one city, which may have perished twenty centuries ago, neighbour to another that enjoyed its brief prosperity in the middle of our era. There is not, for example, the least sign of either Greek or Roman at Amalfi. Whatever may have been the glories of the republic in the early middle ages, they had no relation to the classic past. Yet a few miles off along the bay rise the ancient Greek temples of Pæstum, from a desert—with no trace of any intervening occupants. Poseidonia was founded in the sixth century before Christ, by colonists from Sybaris. Three centuries later the Hellenic element in this settlement, which must already have become a town of no little importance, was submerged by a deluge of recurrent barbarism. Under the Roman rule it changed its name to Pæstum, and was prosperous. The Saracens destroyed it in the ninth century of our era ; and Robert Guiscard carried some of the materials of its buildings to adorn his new town of Salerno. Since then the ancient site has been abandoned to malaria and solitude. The very existence of Pæstum was unknown, except to wandering herdsmen and fishers coasting near its ruined colonnades, until the end of the last century. Yet, strange to relate, after all these revolutions, and in the midst of this total desolation, the only relics of the antique city are three Greek temples, those very temples where the Hellenes, barbarised by their Lucanian neighbours, met to mourn for their lost liberty. It is almost impossible

to trace more than the mere circuit of the walls of Poseidonia. Its port, if port it had in Roman days, has disappeared. Its theatre is only just discernible. Still not a column of the great hypæthral temple, built by the Sybarite colonists two thousand and five hundred years ago, to be a house for Zeus or for Poseidon, has been injured. The accidents that erased far greater cities, like Syracuse, from the surface of the earth—pillage, earthquake, the fury of fanatics, the slow decay of perishable stone, or the lust of palace builders in the middle ages—have spared those three houses of the gods, over whom, in the days of Alexander, the funeral hymn was chanted by the enslaved Hellenes.

‘We do the same,’ said Aristoxenus in his Convivial Miscellanies, ‘as the men of Poseidonia, who dwell on the Tyrrhenian Gulf. It befell them, having been at first true Hellenes, to be utterly barbarised, changing to Tyrrhenes or Romans, and altering their language, together with their other customs. Yet they still observe one Hellenic festival, when they meet together and call to remembrance their old names and bygone institutions ; and having lamented one to the other, and shed bitter tears, they afterwards depart to their own homes. Even thus a few of us also, now that our theatres have been barbarised, and this art of music has gone to ruin and vulgarity, meet together and remember what once music was.’¹

This passage has a strange pathos, considering how it was penned, and how it has come down to us, tossed by the dark indifferent stream of time. The Aristoxenus, who wrote it, was a pupil of the Peripatetic School, born at Tarentum, and therefore familiar with the vicissitudes of Magna Græcia. The study of music was his chief preoccupation ; and he used this episode in the agony of an enslaved Greek city, to point his own conservative disgust for innovations in an art of which we have no

¹ *Athenæus*, xiv. 632.

knowledge left. The works of Aristoxenus have perished, and the fragment I have quoted is imbedded in the gossip of Egyptian Athenæus. In this careless fashion has been opened for us, as it were, a little window on a grief now buried in the oblivion of a hundred generations. After reading his words one May morning, beneath the pediment of Pæstum's noblest ruin, I could not refrain from thinking that if the spirits of those captive Hellenes were to revisit their old habitations, they would change their note of wailing into a thin ghostly pæan, when they found that Romans and Lucanians had passed away, that Christians and Saracens had left alike no trace behind, while the houses of their own ἀντήλιοι θεοὶ—dawn-facing deities—were still abiding in the pride of immemorial strength. Who knows whether buffalo-driver or bandit may not ere now have seen processions of these Poseidonian phantoms, bearing laurels and chaunting hymns on the spot where once they fell each on the other's neck to weep? Gathering his cloak around him and cowering closer to his fire of sticks, the night-watcher in those empty colonnades may have mistaken the Hellenic outlines of his shadowy visitants for fevered dreams, and the melody of their evanished music for the whistling of night winds or the cry of owls. So abandoned is Pæstum in its solitude that we know not even what legends may have sprung up round those relics of a mightier age.

The shrine is ruined now; and far away
To east and west stretch olive groves, whose shade
Even at the height of summer noon is grey.

Asphodels sprout upon the plinth decayed
Of these low columns, and the snake hath found
Her haunt 'neath altar-steps with weeds o'erlaid.

Yet this was once a hero's temple, crowned
With myrtle-boughs by lovers, and with palm
By wrestlers, resonant with sweetest sound
Of flute and fife in summer evening's calm,
And odorous with incense all the year,
With nard and spice, and galbanum and balm.

These lines sufficiently express the sense of desolation felt at Pæstum, except that the scenery is more solemn and mournful, and the temples are too august to be the shrine of any simple hero. There are no olives. The sea plunges on its sandy shore within the space of half-a-mile to westward. Far and wide on either hand stretch dreary fever-stricken marshes. The plain is bounded to the north, and east, and south, with mountains, purple, snow-peaked, serrated, and grandly broken like the hills of Greece. Driving over this vast level where the Silarus stagnates, the monotony of the landscape is broken now and then by a group of buffaloes standing up to their dewlaps in reeds, by peasants on horseback, with goads in their hands, and muskets slung athwart their backs, or by patrols of Italian soldiers crossing and re-crossing on the brigand-haunted roads. Certain portions have been reclaimed from the swamp, and here may be seen white oxen in herds of fifty grazing ; or gangs of women at field-labour, with a man to oversee them, cracking a long hunting-whip ; or the mares and foals of a famous stud-farm browsing under spreading pines. There are no villages, and the few farmhouses are so widely scattered as to make us wonder where the herdsmen and field-workers, scanty as they are, can possibly be lodged.

At last the three great temples come in sight. The rich orange of the central building contrasts with the paler yellow of its two companions, while the glowing colour of all three is splendidly relieved against green vegetation and blue mountain-flanks. Their material is travertine—a calcareous stone formed by the deposit of petrifying waters, which contains fragments of reeds, spiral shells, and other substances, embedded in the porous limestone. In the flourishing period of old Poseidonia these travertine columns were coated with stucco, worked to a smooth surface, and brilliantly tinted to harmonise with the gay costumes of a Greek festival. Even now this coating of fine sand, mingled with slaked lime and water, can be seen in

patches on the huge blocks of the masonry. Thus treated, the travertine lacked little of the radiance of marble, for it must be remembered that the Greeks painted even the Pentelic cornice of the Parthenon with red and blue. Nor can we doubt that the general effect of brightness suited the glad and genial conditions of Greek life.

All the surroundings are altered now, and the lover of the picturesque may be truly thankful that the hand of time, by stripping the buildings of this stucco, without impairing their proportions, has substituted a new harmony of tone between the native stone and the surrounding landscape, no less sympathetic to the present solitude than the old symphony of colours was to the animated circumstances of a populous Greek city. In this way those critics who defend the polychrome decorations of the classic architects, and those who contend that they cannot imagine any alteration from the present toning of Greek temples for the better, are both right.

In point of colour the Pæstum ruins are very similar to those of Girgenti ; but owing to their position on a level plain, in front of a scarcely indented sea-shore, we lack the irregularity which adds so much charm to the row of temples on their broken cliff in the old town of Agrigentum. In like manner the celebrated *asymmetreia* of the buildings of the Athenian Acropolis, which causes so much variety of light and shade upon the temple-fronts, and offers so many novel points of view when they are seen in combination, seems to have been due originally to the exigencies of the ground. At Pæstum, in planning out the city, there can have been no utilitarian reasons for placing the temples at odd angles, either to each other or the shore. Therefore we see them now almost exactly in line and parallel, though at unequal distances. If something of picturesque effect is thus lost at Pæstum through the flatness of the ground, something of impressive grandeur on the other hand is gained by the very regularity with which

those phalanxes of massive Doric columns are drawn up to face the sea.

Poseidonia, as the name betokens, was dedicated to the god of the sea ; and the coins of the city are stamped with his effigy bearing a trident, and with his sacred animal, the bull. It has therefore been conjectured that the central of the three temples—which was hypæthral and had two entrances, east and west—belonged to Poseidon ; and there is something fine in the notion of the god being thus able to pass to and fro from his cella through those sunny peristyles, down to his chariot, yoked with sea-horses, in the brine. Yet hypæthral temples were generally consecrated to Zeus, and it is therefore probable that the traditional name of this vast edifice is wrong. The names of the two other temples, *Tempio di Cerere* and *Basilica*, are wholly unsupported by any proof or probability. The second is almost certainly founded on a mistake ; and if we assign the largest of the three shrines to Zeus, one or other of the lesser belonged most likely to Poseidon.

The style of the temples is severe and primitive. In general effect their Doric architecture is far sterner than that adapted by Ictinus to the Parthenon. The entablature seems somewhat disproportioned to the columns and the pediment ; and, owing to this cause, there is a general effect of heaviness. The columns, again, are thick-set ; nor is the effect of solidity removed by their gradual narrowing from the base upwards. The pillars of the *Neptune* are narrowed in a straight line ; those of the *Basilica* and *Ceres* by a gentle curve. Study of these buildings, so sublime in their massiveness, so noble in the parsimony of their decoration, so dignified in their employment of the simplest means for the attainment of an indestructible effect of harmony, heightens our admiration for the Attic genius which found in this grand manner of the elder Doric architects resources as yet undeveloped ; creating, by slight and subtle alterations of outline, proportion, and rhythm of parts, what

may fairly be classed as a style unique, because exemplified in only one transcendent building.

It is difficult not to return again and again to the beauty of colouring at Pæstum. Lying basking in the sun upon a flat slab of stone, and gazing eastward, we overlook a foreground of dappled light and shadow, across which the lizards run—quick streaks of living emerald—making the bunches of yellow rue and little white serpyllum in the fissures of the masonry nod as they hurry past. Then come two stationary columns, built, it seems, of solid gold, where the sunbeams strike along their russet surface. Between them lies the landscape, a medley first of brakefern and asphodel and feathering acanthus and blue spikes of bugloss ; then a white farm in the middle distance, roofed with the reddest tiles and sheltered by a velvety umbrella pine. Beyond and above the farm, a glimpse of mountains purple almost to indigo with cloud shadows, and flecked with snow. Still higher—but for this we have to raise our head a little—the free heavens enclosed within the framework of the tawny travertine, across which sail hawks and flutter jackdaws, sharply cut against the solid sky. Down from the architrave, to make the vignette perfect, hang tufts of crimson snapdragons. Each opening in the peristyle gives a fresh picture.

The temples are overgrown with snapdragons and mallows, yellow asters and lilac gillyflowers, white allium and wild fig. When a breeze passes, the whole of this many-coloured tapestry waves gently to and fro. The fields around are flowery enough ; but where are the roses? I suppose no one who has read his Virgil at school, crosses the plain from Salerno to Pæstum without those words of the 'Georgics' ringing in his ears : *biferique rosaria Pæsti.* They have that wonderful Virgilian charm which, by a touch, transforms mere daily sights and sounds, and adds poetic mystery to common things. The poets of ancient Rome seem to have felt the magic of this

phrase ; for Ovid has imitated the line in his ‘Metamorphoses,’ tamely substituting *tepidi* for the suggestive *biferi*, while again in his ‘Elegies’ he uses the same termination with *odorati* for his epithet. Martial sings of *Pæstanæ rosæ* and *Pæstani gloria ruris*. Even Ausonius, at the very end of Latin literature, draws from the rosaries of Pæstum a pretty picture of beauty doomed to premature decline :

Vidi Pæstano gaudere rosaria cultu
Exoriente novo roscida Lucifero.

‘I have watched the rose-beds that luxuriate on Pæstum’s well-tilled soil, all dewy in the young light of the rising dawn-star.’

What a place indeed was this for a rose-garden, spreading far and wide along the fertile plain, with its deep loam reclaimed from swamps and irrigated by the passing of perpetual streams ! But where are the roses now ? As well ask, *où sont les neiges d’antan ?*

We left Amalfi for Capri in the freshness of an early morning at the end of May. As we stepped into our six-oared boat the sun rose above the horizon, flooding the sea with gold and flashing on the terraces above Amalfi. High up along the mountains hung pearly and empurpled mists, set like resting-places between a world too beautiful and heaven too far for mortal feet. Not a breath of any wind was stirring. The water heaved with a scarcely perceptible swell, and the vapours lifted gradually as the sun’s rays grew in power. Here the hills descend abruptly on the sea, ending in cliffs where light reflected from the water dances. Huge caverns open in the limestone ; on their edges hang stalactites like beards, and the sea within sleeps dark as night. For some of these caves the maidenhair fern makes a shadowy curtain ; and all of them might be the home of Proteus, or of Calypso, by whose side her mortal lover passed his nights in vain home-sickness :

ἐν σπέσσι γλαφυροῖς παρ' οὐκ ἐθέλων ἐθελούσῃ.

This is a truly Odyssean journey. Soon the islands of the Sirens come in sight,—bare bluffs of rock, shaped like galleys taking flight for the broad sea. As we row past in this ambrosial weather, the oarsmen keeping time and ploughing furrows in the fruitless fields of Nereus, it is not difficult to hear the siren voices—for earth and heaven and sea make melodies far above mortal singing. The water round the Galli—so the islands are now called, as antiquaries tell us, from an ancient fortress named Guallo—is very deep, and not a sign of habitation is to be seen upon them. In bygone ages they were used as prisons; and many doges of Amalfi languished their lives away upon those shadeless stones, watching the sea around them blaze like a burnished shield at noon, and the peaks of Capri deepen into purple when the west was glowing after sunset with the rose and daffodil of Southern twilight.

The end of the Sorrentine promontory, Point Campanella, is absolutely barren—grey limestone, with the scantiest over-growth of rosemary and myrtle. A more desolate spot can hardly be imagined. But now the morning breeze springs up behind; sails are hoisted, and the boatmen ship their oars. Under the albatross wings of our lateen sails we scud across the freshening waves. The precipice of Capri soars against the sky, and the Bay of Naples expands before us with those sweeping curves and azure amplitude that all the poets of the world have sung. Even thus the mariners of ancient Hellas rounded this headland when the world was young. Rightly they named yon rising ground, beneath Vesuvius, Posilippo—rest from grief. Even now, after all those centuries of toil, though the mild mountain has been turned into a mouth of murderous fire, though Roman emperors and Spanish despots have done their worst to mar what nature made so perfect, we may here lay down the burden of our cares, gaining tranquillity by no mysterious lustral rites, no penitential prayers or

offerings of holocausts, but by the influence of beauty in the earth and air, and by sympathy with a people unspoiled in their healthful life of labour alternating with simple joy.

The last hour of the voyage was beguiled by stories of our boatmen, some of whom had seen service on distant seas, while others could tell of risks on shore and love adventures. They showed us how the tunny-nets were set, and described the solitary life of the tunny-watchers, in their open boats, waiting to spear the monsters of the deep entangled in the chambers made for them beneath the waves. How much of Æschylean imagery, I reflected, is drawn from this old fisher's art—the toils of Clytemnestra and the tragedy of Psyttaleia rising to my mind. One of the crew had his little son with him, a child of six years old ; and when the boy was restless, his father spoke of Barbarossa and Timberio (*sic*) to keep him quiet ; for the memory of the Moorish pirate and the mighty emperor is still alive here. The people of Capri are as familiar with Tiberius as the Bretons with King Arthur ; and the hoof-mark of illustrious crime is stamped upon the island.

Capri offers another example of the versatility of Southern Italy. If Amalfi brings back to us the naval and commercial prosperity of the early middle ages ; if Pæstum remains a monument of the oldest Hellenic civilisation ; Capri, at a few miles' distance, is dedicated to the Roman emperor who made it his favourite residence, when, life-weary with the world and all its shows, he turned these many peaks and slumbering caves into a summer palace for the nursing of his brain-sick phantasy. Already, on landing, we are led to remember that from this shore was loosed the galley bearing that great letter—*verbosa et grandis epistola*—which undid Sejanus and shook Rome. Riding to Ana-Capri and the Salto di Tiberio, exploring the remains of his favourite twelve villas, and gliding over the smooth waters paved with the white marbles of his baths, we are for ever attended by the same

forbidding spectre. Here, perchance, were the *sedes a canarum libidinum* whereof Suetonius speaks; the Spintrian medals, found in these recesses, still bear witness that the biographer trusted no mere fables for the picture he has drawn. Here, too, below the Villa Jovis, gazing 700 feet sheer down into the waves, we tread the very parapet whence fell the victims of that maniac lust for blood. ‘After long and exquisite torments,’ says the Roman writer, ‘he ordered condemned prisoners to be cast into the sea before his eyes; marines were stationed near to pound the fallen corpses with poles and oars, lest haply breath should linger in their limbs.’ The Neapolitan Museum contains a little bas-relief representing Tiberius, with the well-known features of the Claudian house, seated astride upon a donkey, with a girl before him. A slave is leading the beast and its burden to a terminal statue under an olive-tree. This curious relic, discovered some while since at Capri, haunted my fancy as I climbed the olive-planted slopes to his high villa on the Arx Tiberii. It is some relief, amid so much that is tragic in the associations of this place, to have the horrible Tiberius burlesqued and brought into donkey-riding relation with the tourist of to-day. And what an ironical revenge of time it is that his famous Salto should be turned into a restaurant, where the girls dance tarantella for a few coppers; that a toothless hermit should occupy a cell upon the very summit of his Villa Jovis; and that the Englishwoman’s comfortable hotel should be called *Timberio* by the natives! A spiritualist might well believe that the emperor’s ghost was forced to haunt the island, and to expiate his old atrocities by gazing on these modern vulgarisms.

Few problems suggested by history are more darkly fascinating than the madness of despots; and of this madness, whether inherent in their blood or encouraged by the circumstance of absolute autocracy, the emperors of the Claudian and

Julian houses furnish the most memorable instance.¹ It is this that renders Tiberius ever present to our memory at Capri. Nor will the student of Suetonius forget his even more memorable grand-nephew Caligula. The following passage is an episode from the biography of that imperial maniac, whose portrait in green basalt, with the strain of dire mental tension on the forehead, is still so beautiful that we are able at this distance of time to pity more than loathe him. ‘Above all, he was tormented with nervous irritation, by sleeplessness ; for he enjoyed not more than three hours of nocturnal repose, nor even these in pure untroubled rest, but agitated by phantasmata of portentous augury ; as, for example, upon one occasion, among other spectral visions, he fancied that he saw the sea, under some definite impersonation, conversing with himself. Hence it was, and from this incapacity of sleeping, and from weariness of lying awake, that he had fallen into habits of ranging all night long through the palace, sometimes throwing himself on a couch, sometimes wandering along the vast corridors, watching for the earliest dawn, and anxiously wishing its approach.’ Those corridors, or loggie, where Caligula spent his wakeful hours, opened perchance upon this Bay of Naples, if not upon the sea-waves of his favourite Porto d’Anzio ; for we know that one of his great follies was a palace built above the sea on piles at Baiæ ; and where else could *Pelagus*, with his cold azure eyes and briny locks, have more appropriately terrified his sleep with prophecy conveyed in dreams ? The very nature of this vision, selected for such special comment by Suetonius as to show that it had troubled Caligula profoundly, proves the fantastic nature of the man, and justifies the hypothesis of insanity.

¹ De Quincey, in his essay on *The Cæsars*, has worked out this subject with such artistic vividness that no more need be said. From his pages I have quoted the paraphrastic version of Suetonius that follows.

But it is time to shake off the burden of the past. Only students, carrying superfluity of culture in their knapsacks, will ponder over the imperial lunatics who made Capri and Baiæ fashionable in the days of ancient Rome. Neither Tiberius nor Caligula, nor yet Ferdinand of Aragon or Bomba for that matter, has been able to leave trace of vice or scar of crime on nature in this Eden. A row round the island, or a supper-party in the loggia above the sea at sunset-time, is no less charming now, in spite of Roman or Spanish memories, than when the world was young.

Sea-mists are frequent in the early summer mornings, swathing the cliffs of Capri in impenetrable wool and brooding on the perfectly smooth water till the day-wind rises. Then they disappear like magic, rolling in smoke-wreaths from the surface of the sea, condensing into clouds and climbing the hill-sides like Oceanides in quest of Prometheus, or taking their station on the watch-towers of the world, as in the chorus of the *Nephelai*. Such a morning may be chosen for the *giro* of the island. The blue grotto loses nothing of its beauty, but rather gains by contrast, when passing from dense fog you find yourself transported to a world of wavering subaqueous sheen. It is only through the opening of the very topmost arch that a boat can glide into this cavern ; the arch itself spreads downward through the water, so that all the light is transmitted from beneath and coloured by the sea. The grotto is domed in many chambers ; and the water is so clear that you can see the bottom, silvery, with black-finned fishes diapered upon the blue white sand. The flesh of a diver in this water showed like the faces of children playing at snap-dragon ; all around him the spray leapt up with living fire ; and when the oars struck the surface, it was as though a phosphorescent sea had been smitten, and the drops ran from the blades in blue pearls. I have only once seen anything (outside the magic-world of a pantomime) to equal these effects of blue

and silver ; and that was when I made my way into an ice-cave in the Great Aletsch glacier—not an artificial gallery such as they cut at Grindelwald, but a natural cavern, arched, hollowed into fanciful recesses, and hung with stalactites of pendent ice. The difference between the glacier-cavern and the sea-grotto was that in the former all the light was transmitted through transparent sides, so that the whole was one uniform azure, except in rare places where little chinks opened upwards to the air, and the light of day came glancing with a roseate flush. In the latter the light sent from beneath through the water played upon a roof of rock ; reflections intermingled with translucence ; and a greater variety of light and shadow compensated the lack of that strange sense of being shut within a solid gem.

Numberless are the caves at Capri. The so-called green grotto has the beauty of moss-agate in its liquid floor ; the red grotto shows a warmer chord of colour ; and where there is no other charm to notice, endless beauty may be found in the play of sunlight upon roofs of limestone, tinted with yellow, orange, and pale pink, mossed over, hung with fern, and catching tones of blue or green from the still deeps beneath.

Sheets of water, wherever found, are the most subtle heighteners of colour. To those who are familiar with Venetian or Mantuan sunsets, who have seen the flocks of flamingoes reflected on the lagoons of Tunis, or who have watched stormy red flakes tossed from crest to crest of great Atlantic waves on our own coasts, this need hardly be said. Yet I cannot leave this beauty of the sea at Capri without touching on a melodrama of light and colour I once saw at Castellammare. It was a festa-night, when the people sent up rockets and fireworks of every hue from the harbour-breakwater. The surf rolled shoreward like a bath of molten metals, all confused of blue, and red, and green, and gold—dying dolphin tints that burned strangely beneath the purple skies and tranquil stars.

Boats at sea hung out their crimson cressets, flickering in long lines on the bay ; and larger craft moved slowly with rows of lamps defining their curves ; while the full moon shed over all her ‘vitreous pour, just tinged with blue.’ To some tastes this mingling of natural and artificial effects would seem unworthy of sober notice ; but I confess to having enjoyed it with childish eagerness like music never to be forgotten.

After a day upon the water it is pleasant to rest at sunset in the loggia above the sea. The Bay of Naples stretches far and wide in front, beautiful by reason chiefly of the long fine line descending from Vesuvius, dipping almost to a level and then gliding up to join the highlands of the north. Now sun and moon begin to mingle : waning and waxing splendours. The cliffs above our heads are still blushing a deep flame-colour, like the heart of some tea-rose ; when lo, the touch of the huntress is laid upon those eastern pinnacles, and the horizon glimmers with her rising. Was it on such a night that Ferdinand of Aragon fled from his capital before the French, with eyes turned ever to the land he loved, chanting, as he leaned from his galley’s stern, that melancholy psalm—‘ Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain’—and seeing Naples dwindle to a white blot on the purple shore ?

Our journey takes the opposite direction. Farewell to Capri, welcome to Sorrento ! The roads are sweet with scent of acacia and orange flowers. When you walk in a garden at night, the white specks beneath your feet are fallen petals of lemon blossoms. Over the walls hang cataracts of roses, honey-pale clusters of the Banksia rose, and pink bushes of the China rose, growing as we never see them grow with us. The grey rocks wave with gladiolus—feathers of crimson, set amid tufts of rosemary, and myrtle, and tree-spurge. In the clefts of the sandstone, and behind the orchard-walls, sleeps a dark green night of foliage, in the midst of which gleam globed

oranges, and lemons dropping like great pearls of palest amber dew. It is difficult to believe that the lemons have not grown into length by their own weight, as though mere hanging on the bough prevented them from being round—so waxen are they. Overhead soar stone-pines—a roof of sombre green, a lattice-work of strong red branches, through which the moon peers wonderfully. One part of this marvellous *piano* is bare rock tufted with keen-scented herbs, and sparsely grown with locust-trees and olives. Another waves from sea to summit with beech-copses and oak-woods, as verdant as the most abundant English valley. Another region turns its hoary raiment of olive-gardens to the sun and sea, or flourishes with fig and vine. Everywhere, the houses of men are dazzling white, perched on natural coigns of vantage, clustered on the brink of brown cliffs, nestling under mountain eaves, or piled up from the sea-beach in ascending tiers, until the broad knees of the hills are reached, and great Pan, the genius of solitude in nature, takes unto himself a region yet untenanted by man. The occupations of the sea and land are blent together on this shore ; and the people are both blithe and gentle. It is true that their passions are upon the surface, and that the knife is ready to their hand. But the combination of fierceness and softness in them has an infinite charm when one has learned by observation that their lives are laborious and frugal, and that their honesty is hardly less than their vigour. Happy indeed are they—so happy that, but for crimes accumulated through successive generations by bad governors, and but for superstitions cankering the soul within, they might deserve what Shelley wrote of his imagined island in ‘Epipsyhidion.’

THOUGHTS IN ITALY ABOUT CHRISTMAS.

WHAT is the meaning of our English Christmas? What makes it seem so truly Northern, national, and homely, that we do not like to keep the feast upon a foreign shore? These questions grew upon me as I stood one Advent afternoon beneath the Dome of Florence. A priest was thundering from the pulpit against French scepticism, and exalting the miracle of the Incarnation. Through the whole dim church blazed altar candles. Crowds of men and women knelt or sat about the transepts, murmuring their prayers of preparation for the festival. At the door, were pedlars, selling little books, in which were printed the offices for Christmas-tide, with stories of S. Felix and S. Catherine, whose devotion to the infant Christ had wrought them weal, and promises of the remission of four purgatorial centuries to those who zealously observed the service of the Church at this most holy time. I knew that the people of Florence were preparing for Christmas in their own way. But it was not our way. It happened that outside the church the climate seemed as wintry as our own—snow-storms and ice, and wind and chilling fog, suggesting Northern cold. But as the palaces of Florence lacked our comfortable firesides, and the greetings of friends lacked our hearty handshakes and loud good wishes, so there seemed to be a want of the home feeling in those Christmas services and customs. Again I asked myself, ‘What do we mean by Christmas?’

The same thought pursued me as I drove to Rome : by

Siena, still and brown, uplifted, mid her russet hills and wilderness of rolling plain ; by Chiusi, with its sepulchral city of a dead and unknown people ; through the chestnut forests of the Apennines ; by Orvieto's rock, Viterbo's fountains, and the oak-grown solitudes of the Ciminian heights, from which one looks across the broad lake of Bolsena and the Roman plain. Brilliant sunlight, like that of a day in late September, shone upon the landscape, and I thought—Can this be Christmas ? Are they bringing mistletoe and holly on the country carts into the towns in far-off England ? Is it clear and frosty there, with the tramp of heels upon the flag, or snowing silently, or foggy with a round red sun and cries of warning at the corners of the streets ?

I reached Rome on Christmas-eve, in time to hear midnight services in the Sistine Chapel and S. John Lateran, to breathe the dust of decayed shrines, to wonder at doting cardinals begrimed with snuff, and to resent the open-mouthed bad taste of my countrymen who made a mockery of these palsied-stricken ceremonies. Nine cardinals going to sleep, nine train-bearers talking scandal, twenty huge, handsome Switzers in the dress devised by Michael Angelo, some ushers, a choir caged off by gilded railings, the insolence and eagerness of polyglot tourists, plenty of wax-candles dripping on people's heads, and a continual nasal drone proceeding from the gilded cage, out of which were caught at intervals these words, and these only,—‘*Sæcula sæculorum, amen.*’ Such was the celebrated Sistine service. The chapel blazed with light, and very strange did Michael Angelo's Last Judgment, his Sibyls, and his Prophets, appear upon the roof and wall above this motley and unmeaning crowd.

Next morning I put on my dress-clothes and white tie, and repaired, with groups of Englishmen similarly attired, and of Engliswomen in black crape—the regulation costume—to S. Peter's. It was a glorious and cloudless morning ; sun-

beams streamed in columns from the southern windows, falling on the vast space full of soldiers and a mingled mass of every kind of people. Up the nave stood double files of the Pontifical guard. Monks and nuns mixed with the Swiss cuirassiers and halberds. Contadini crowded round the sacred images, and especially round the toe of S. Peter. I saw many mothers lift their swaddled babies up to kiss it. Valets of cardinals, with the invariable red umbrellas, hung about side chapels and sacristies. Purple-mantled monsignori, like emperor butterflies, floated down the aisles from sunlight into shadow. Movement, colour, and the stir of expectation, made the church alive. We showed our dress-clothes to the guard, were admitted within their ranks, and solemnly walked up toward the dome. There under its broad canopy stood the altar, glittering with gold and candles. The choir was carpeted and hung with scarlet. Two magnificent thrones rose ready for the Pope: guards of honour, soldiers, attachés, and the élite of the residents and visitors in Rome, were scattered in groups picturesquely varied by ecclesiastics of all orders and degrees. At ten a stirring took place near the great west door. It opened, and we saw the procession of the Pope and his cardinals. Before him marched the singers and the blowers of the silver trumpets, making the most liquid melody. Then came his Cap of Maintenance, and three tiaras; then a company of mitred priests; next the cardinals in scarlet; and last, aloft beneath a canopy, upon the shoulders of men, and flanked by the mystic fans, advanced the Pope himself, swaying to and fro like a Lama, or an Aztec king. Still the trumpets blew most silverly, and still the people knelt; and as he came, we knelt and had his blessing. Then he took his state and received homage. After this the choir began to sing a mass of Palestrina's, and the deacons robed the Pope. Marvellous putting on and taking off of robes and tiaras and mitres ensued, during which there was much bowing and praying and burning

of incense. At last, when he had reached the highest stage of sacrificial sanctity, he proceeded to the altar, waited on by cardinals and bishops. Having censed it carefully, he took a higher throne and divested himself of part of his robes. Then the mass went on in earnest, till the moment of consecration, when it paused, the Pope descended from his throne, passed down the choir, and reached the altar. Every one knelt; the shrill bell tinkled; the silver trumpets blew; the air became sick and heavy with incense, so that sun and candle light swooned in an atmosphere of odorous cloud-wreaths. The whole church trembled, hearing the strange subtle music vibrate in the dome, and seeing the Pope with his own hands lift Christ's body from the altar and present it to the people. An old parish priest, pilgrim from some valley of the Apennines, who knelt beside me, cried and quivered with excess of adoration. The great tombs around, the sculptured saints and angels, the dome, the volumes of light and incense and unfamiliar melody, the hierarchy ministrant, the white and central figure of the Pope, the multitude—made up an overpowering scene. What followed was comparatively tedious. My mind again went back to England, and I thought of Christmas services beginning in all village churches and all cathedrals throughout the land—their old familiar hymn, their anthem of Handel, their trite and sleepy sermons. How different the two feasts are—Christmas in Rome, Christmas in England—Italy and the North—the spirit of Latin and the spirit of Teutonic Christianity.

What, then, constitutes the essence of our Christmas as different from that of more Southern nations? In their origin they are the same. The stable of Bethlehem, the star-led kings, the shepherds, and the angels—all the beautiful story, in fact, which S. Luke alone of the Evangelists has preserved for us—are what the whole Christian world owes to the religious feeling of the Hebrews. The first and second chapters of S. Luke

are most important in the history of Christian mythology and art. They are far from containing the whole of what we mean by Christmas ; but the religious poetry which gathers round that season, must be sought upon their pages. Angels, ever since the Exodus, played a first part in the visions of the Hebrew prophets and in the lives of their heroes. We know not what reminiscences of old Egyptian genii, what strange shadows of the winged beasts of Persia, flitted through their dreams. In the desert, or under the boundless sky of Babylon, these shapes became no less distinct than the precise outlines of Oriental scenery. They incarnated the vivid thoughts and intense longings of the prophets, who gradually came to give them human forms and titles. We hear of them by name, as servants and attendants upon God, as guardians of nations, and patrons of great men. To the Hebrew mind the whole unseen world was full of spirits, active, strong, and swift of flight, of various aspect, and with power of speech. It is hard to imagine what the first Jewish disciples and the early Greek and Roman converts thought of these great beings. To us, the hierarchies of Dionysius, the services of the Church, the poetry of Dante and Milton, and the forms of art, have made them quite familiar. Northern nations have appropriated the Angels, and invested them with attributes alien to their Oriental origin. They fly through our pine-forests, and the gloom of cloud or storm ; they ride upon our clanging bells, and gather in swift squadrons among the arches of Gothic cathedrals ; we see them making light in the cavernous depth of woods, where sun or moon beams rarely pierce, and ministering to the wounded or the weary ; they bear aloft the censers of the mass ; they sing in the anthems of choristers, and live in strains of poetry and music ; our churches bear their names ; we call our children by their titles ; we love them as our guardians, and the whole unseen world is made a home to us by their imagined presence. All these things are the

growth of time and the work of races whose myth-making imagination is more artistic than that of the Hebrews. Yet this rich legacy of romance is bound up in the second chapter of S. Luke ; and it is to him we must give thanks when at Christmas-tide we read of the shepherds and the angels in English words more beautiful than his own Greek.

The angels in the stable of Bethlehem, the kings who came from the far East, and the adoring shepherds, are the gift of Hebrew legend and of the Greek physician Luke to Christmas. How these strange and splendid incidents affect modern fancy remains for us to examine ; at present we must ask, What did the Romans give to Christmas ? The customs of the Christian religion, like everything that belongs to the modern world, have nothing pure and simple in their nature. They are the growth of long ages, and of widely different systems, parts of which have been fused into one living whole. In this respect they resemble our language, our blood, our literature, and our modes of thought and feeling. We find Christianity in one sense wholly original ; in another sense composed of old materials ; in both senses universal and cosmopolitan. The Roman element in Christmas is a remarkable instance of this acquisitive power of Christianity. The celebration of the festival takes place at the same time as that of the Pagan Saturnalia ; and from the old customs of that holiday, Christmas absorbed much that was consistent with the spirit of the new religion. During the Saturnalia the world enjoyed, in thought at least, a perfect freedom. Men who had gone to bed as slaves, rose their own masters. From the *ergastula* and dismal sunless cages they went forth to ramble in the streets and fields. Liberty of speech was given them, and they might satirise those vices of their lords to which, on other days, they had to minister. Rome on this day, by a strange negation of logic, which we might almost call a prompting of blind conscience, negated the philosophic dictum that barbarians were

by law of nature slaves, and acknowledged the higher principle of equality. The Saturnalia stood out from the whole year as a protest in favour of universal brotherhood, and the right that all men share alike to enjoy life after their own fashion, within the bounds that nature has assigned them. We do not know how far the Stoic school, which was so strong in Rome, and had so many points of contact with the Christians, may have connected its own theories of equality with this old custom of the Saturnalia. But it is possible that the fellowship of human beings, and the temporary abandonment of class prerogatives, became a part of Christmas through the habit of the Saturnalia. We are perhaps practising a Roman virtue to this day when at Christmas-time our hand is liberal, and we think it wrong that the poorest wretch should fail to feel the pleasure of the day.

Of course Christianity inspired the freedom of the Saturnalia with a higher meaning. The mystery of the Incarnation, or the deification of human nature, put an end to slavery through all the year, as well as on this single day. What had been a kind of aimless licence became the most ennobling principle by which men are exalted to a state of self-respect and mutual reverence. Still in the Saturnalia was found, ready-made, an easy symbol of unselfish enjoyment. It is, however, dangerous to push speculations of this kind to the very verge of possibility.

The early Roman Christians probably kept Christmas with no special ceremonies. Christ was as yet too close to them. He had not become the glorious creature of their fancy, but was partly an historic being, partly confused in their imagination with reminiscences of Pagan deities. As the Good Shepherd, and as Orpheus, we find him painted in the Catacombs ; and those who thought of him as God, loved to dwell upon his risen greatness more than on the idyll of his birth. To them his entry upon earth seemed less a subject of rejoicing than his opening of the heavens ; they suffered, and looked

forward to a future happiness ; they would not seem to make this world permanent by sharing its gladness with the Heathens. Theirs, in truth, was a religion of hope and patience, not of triumphant recollection or of present joyfulness.

The Northern converts of the early Church added more to the peculiar character of our Christmas. Who can tell what Pagan rites were half sanctified by their association with that season, or how much of our cheerfulness belonged to Heathen orgies and the banquets of grim warlike gods ? Certainly nothing strikes one more in reading Scandinavian poetry, than the strange mixture of Pagan and Christian sentiments which it presents. For though the missionaries of the Church did all they could to wean away the minds of men from their old superstitions ; yet, wiser than their modern followers, they saw that some things might remain untouched, and that even the great outlines of the Christian faith might be adapted to the habits of the people whom they studied to convert. Thus, on the one hand, they destroyed the old temples one by one, and called the idols by the name of devils, and strove to obliterate the songs which sang great deeds of bloody gods and heroes ; while, on the other, they taught the Northern sea-kings that Jesus was a Prince surrounded by twelve dukes, who conquered all the world. Besides, they left the days of the week to their old patrons. It is certain that the imagination of the people preserved more of heathendom than even such missionaries could approve ; mixing up the deeds of the Christian saints with old heroic legends ; seeing Balder's beauty in Christ and the strength of Thor in Samson ; attributing magic to S. John ; swearing, as of old, bloody oaths in God's name, over the gilded boar's-head ; burning the yule-log, and cutting sacred boughs to grace their new-built churches.

The songs of choirs and sound of holy bells, and superstitious reverence for the mass, began to tell upon the people ; and soon the echo of their old religion only swelled upon the ear at

intervals, attaching itself to times of more than usual sanctity. Christmas was one of these times, and the old faith threw around its celebration a fantastic light. Many customs of the genial Pagan life remained ; they seemed harmless when the sense of joy was Christian. The Druid's mistletoe graced the church porches of England and of France, and no blood lingered on its berries. Christmas thus became a time of extraordinary mystery. The people loved it as connecting their old life with the new religion, perhaps unconsciously, though every one might feel that Christmas was no common Christian feast. On its eve strange wonders happened : the thorn that sprang at Glastonbury from the sacred crown which Joseph brought with him from Palestine, when Avalon was still an island, blossomed on that day. The Cornish miners seemed to hear the sound of singing men arise from submerged churches by the shore, and others said that bells, beneath the ground where villages had been, chimed yearly on that eve. No evil thing had power, as Marcellus in 'Hamlet' tells us, and the bird of dawning crowed the whole night through. One might multiply folk-lore about the sanctity of Christmas, but enough has been said to show that round it lingered long the legendary spirit of old Paganism. It is not to Jews, or Greeks, or Romans only that we owe our ancient Christmas fancies, but also to those half-heathen ancestors who lovingly looked back to Odin's days, and held the old while they embraced the new.

Let us imagine Christmas Day in a mediæval town of Northern England. The cathedral is only partly finished. Its nave and transepts are the work of Norman architects, but the choir has been destroyed in order to be rebuilt by more graceful designers and more skilful hands. The old city is full of craftsmen, assembled to complete the church. Some have come as a religious duty, to work off their tale of sins by bodily labour. Some are animated by a love of art—simple men, who might have rivalled with the Greeks in ages of more cultivation.

Others, again, are well-known carvers, brought for hire from distant towns and countries beyond the sea. But to-day, and for some days past, the sound of hammer and chisel has been silent in the choir. Monks have bustled about the nave, dressing it up with holly-boughs and bushes of yew, and preparing a stage for the sacred play they are going to exhibit on the feast day. Christmas is not like Corpus Christi, and now the market-place stands inches deep in snow, so that the Miracles must be enacted beneath a roof instead of in the open air. And what place so appropriate as the cathedral, where poor people may have warmth and shelter while they see the show? Besides, the gloomy old church, with its windows darkened by the falling snow, lends itself to candlelight effects that will enhance the splendour of the scene. Everything is ready. The incense of morning mass yet lingers round the altar. The voice of the friar who told the people from the pulpit the story of Christ's birth, has hardly ceased to echo. Time has just been given for a mid-day dinner, and for the shepherds and farm lads to troop in from the country-side. The monks are ready at the wooden stage to draw its curtain, and all the nave is full of eager faces. There you may see the smith and carpenter, the butcher's wife, the country priest, and the grey cowled friar. Scores of workmen, whose home the cathedral for the time is made, are also here, and you may know the artists by their thoughtful foreheads and keen eyes. That young monk carved Madonna and her Son above the southern porch. Beside him stands the master mason, whose strong arms have hewn gigantic images of prophets and apostles for the pinnacles outside the choir; and the little man with cunning eyes between the two is he who cuts such quaint hobgoblins for the gargoyle. He has a vein of satire in him, and his humour overflows into the stone. Many and many a grim beast and hideous head has he hidden among vine-leaves and trellis-work upon the porches. Those who

know him well are loth to anger him, for fear their sons and sons' sons should laugh at them for ever caricatured in solid stone.

Hark ! there sounds the bell. The curtain is drawn, and the candles blaze brightly round the wooden stage. What is this first scene ? We have God in Heaven, dressed like a Pope with triple crown, and attended by his court of angels. They sing and toss up censers till he lifts his hand and speaks. In a long Latin speech he unfolds the order of creation and his will concerning man. At the end of it up leaps an ugly buffoon, in goatskin, with rams' horns upon his head. Some children begin to cry ; but the older people laugh, for this is the Devil, the clown and comic character, who talks their common tongue, and has no reverence before the very throne of Heaven. He asks leave to plague men, and receives it ; then, with many a curious caper, he goes down to Hell, beneath the stage. The angels sing and toss their censers as before, and the first scene closes to a sound of organs. The next is more conventional, in spite of some grotesque incidents. It represents the Fall ; the monks hurry over it quickly, as a tedious but necessary prelude to the birth of Christ. That is the true Christmas part of the ceremony, and it is understood that the best actors and most beautiful dresses are to be reserved for it. The builders of the choir in particular are interested in the coming scenes, since one of their number has been chosen, for his handsome face and tenor voice, to sing the angel's part. He is a young fellow of nineteen, but his beard is not yet grown, and long hair hangs down upon his shoulders. A chorister of the cathedral, his younger brother, will act the Virgin Mary. At last the curtain is drawn.

We see a cottage-room, dimly lighted by a lamp, and Mary spinning near her bedside. She sings a country air, and goes on working, till a rustling noise is heard, more light is thrown upon the stage, and a glorious creature, in white raiment, with broad golden wings, appears. He bears a lily, and cries,—

'Ave Maria, Gratia Plena !' She does not answer, but stands confused, with down-dropped eyes and timid mien. Gabriel rises from the ground and comforts her, and sings aloud his message of glad tidings. Then Mary gathers courage, and, kneeling in her turn, thanks God; and when the angel and his radiance disappears, she sings the song of the Magnificat, clearly and simply, in the darkened room. Very soft and silver sounds this hymn through the great church. The women kneel, and children are hushed as by a lullaby. But some of the hinds and 'prentice-lads begin to think it rather dull. They are not sorry when the next scene opens with a sheepfold and a little camp-fire. Unmistakable bleatings issue from the fold, and five or six common fellows are sitting round the blazing wood. One might fancy they had stepped straight from the church floor to the stage, so natural do they look. Besides, they call themselves by common names—Colin, and Tom Lie-a-bed, and nimble Dick. Many a round laugh wakes echoes in the church when these shepherds stand up, and hold debate about a stolen sheep. Tom Lie-a-bed has nothing to remark but that he is very sleepy, and does not want to go in search of it to-night; Colin cuts jokes, and throws out shrewd suspicions that Dick knows something of the matter; but Dick is sly, and keeps them off the scent, although a few of his asides reveal to the audience that he is the real thief. While they are thus talking, silence falls upon the shepherds. Soft music from the church organ breathes, and they appear to fall asleep.

The stage is now quite dark, and for a few moments the aisles echo only to the dying melody. When, behold, a ray of light is seen, and splendour grows around the stage from hidden candles, and in the glory Gabriel appears upon a higher platform made to look like clouds. The shepherds wake in confusion, striving to shelter their eyes from this unwonted brilliancy. But Gabriel waves his lily, spreads his great gold wings, and bids good cheer with clarion voice. The shepherds fall to

worship, and suddenly round Gabriel there gathers a choir of angels, and a song of ‘Gloria in Excelsis’ to the sound of a deep organ is heard far off. From distant aisles it swells, and seems to come from heaven. Through a long resonant fugue the glory flies, and as it ceases with complex conclusion, the lights die out, the angels disappear, and Gabriel fades into the darkness. Still the shepherds kneel, rustically chanting a carol half in Latin, half in English, which begins ‘In dulci Jubilo.’ The people know it well, and when the chorus rises with ‘Ubi sunt gaudia?’ its wild melody is caught by voices up and down the nave. This scene makes deep impression upon many hearts; for the beauty of Gabriel is rare, and few who see him in his angel’s dress would know him for the lad who daily carves his lilies and broad water flags about the pillars of the choir. To that simple audience he interprets Heaven, and little children will see him in their dreams. Dark winter nights and awful forests will be trodden by his feet, made musical by his melodious voice, and parted by the rustling of his wings. The youth himself may return to-morrow to the workman’s blouse and chisel, but his memory lives in many minds and may form a part of Christmas for the fancy of men as yet unborn.

The next drawing of the curtain shows us the stable of Bethlehem crowned by its star. There kneels Mary, and Joseph leans upon his staff. The ox and ass are close at hand, and Jesus lies in jewelled robes on straw within the manger. To right and left bow the shepherds, worshipping in dumb show, while voices from behind chant a solemn hymn. In the midst of the melody is heard a flourish of trumpets, and heralds step upon the stage, followed by the three crowned kings. They have come from the far East, led by the star. The song ceases, while drums and fifes and trumpets play a stately march. The kings pass by, and do obeisance one by one. Each gives some costly gift; each doffs his crown and

leaves it at the Saviour's feet. Then they retire to a distance and worship in silence like the shepherds. Again the angel's song is heard, and while it dies away the curtain closes, and the lights are put out.

The play is over, and evening has come. The people must go from the warm church into the frozen snow, and crunch their homeward way beneath the moon. But in their minds they carry a sense of light and music and unearthly loveliness. Not a scene of this day's pageant will be lost. It grows within them and creates the poetry of Christmas. Nor must we forget the sculptors who listen to the play. We spoke of them minutely, because these mysteries sank deep into their souls and found a way into their carvings on the cathedral walls. The monk who made Madonna by the southern porch, will remember Gabriel, and place him bending low in lordly salutation by her side. The painted glass of the chapter-house will glow with fiery choirs of angels learned by heart that night. And who does not know the mocking devils and quaint satyrs that the humorous sculptor will carve among his fruits and flowers? Some of the misereres of the stalls still bear portraits of the shepherd thief, and of the ox and ass who blinked so blindly when the kings, by torchlight, brought their dazzling gifts. Truly these old miracle-plays and the carved work of cunning hands that they inspired, are worth to us more than all the delicate creations of Italian pencils. Our homely Northern churches still retain, for the child who reads their bosses and their sculptured fronts, more Christmas poetry than we can find in Fra Angelico's devoutness or the liveliness of Giotto. Not that Southern artists have done nothing for our Christmas. Cimabue's gigantic angels at Assisi, and the radiant seraphs of Raphael or of Signorelli, were seen by Milton in his Italian journey. He gazed in Romish churches on graceful Nativities, into which Angelico and Credi threw their simple souls. How much they tinged his fancy we cannot say. But what we know

of heavenly hierarchies we later men have learned from Milton ; and what he saw he spoke, and what he spoke in sounding verse lives for us now and sways our reason, and controls our fancy, and makes fine art of high theology.

Thus have I attempted rudely to recall a scene of mediæval Christmas. To understand the domestic habits of that age is not so easy, though one can fancy how the barons in their halls held Christmas, with the boar's head and the jester and the great yule-log. On the daïs sat lord and lady, waited on by knight and squire and page ; but down the long hall feasted yeomen and hinds and men-at-arms. Little remains to us of those days, and we have outworn their jollity. It is really from the Elizabethan poets that our sense of old-fashioned festivity arises. They lived at the end of one age and the beginning of another. Though born to inaugurate the new era, they belonged by right of association and sympathy to the period that was fleeting fast away. This enabled them to represent the poetry of past and present. Old customs and old states of feeling, when they are about to perish, pass into the realm of art. For art is like a flower, which consummates the plant and ends its growth, while it translates its nature into loveliness. Thus Dante and Lorenzetti and Orcagna enshrined mediæval theology in works of imperishable beauty, and Shakspere and his fellows made immortal the life and manners that were decaying in their own time. Men do not reflect upon their mode of living till they are passing from one state to another, and the consciousness of art implies a beginning of new things. Let one who wishes to appreciate the ideal of an English Christmas read Shakspere's song, 'When icicles hang by the wall ;' and if he knows some old grey grange, far from the high-road, among pastures, with a river flowing near, and cawing rooks in elm-trees by the garden-wall, let him place Dick and Joan and Marian there.

We have heard so much of pensioners, and barons of beef,

and yule-logs, and bay, and rosemary, and holly boughs cut upon the hill-side, and crab-apples bobbing in the wassail bowl, and masques and mummers, and dancers on the rushes, that we need not here describe a Christmas-eve in olden times. Indeed, this last half of the nineteenth century is weary of the worn-out theme. But one characteristic of the age of Elizabeth may be mentioned : that is its love of music. Fugued melodies, sung by voices without instruments, were much in vogue. We call them madrigals, and their half-merry, half-melancholy music yet recalls the time when England had her gift of art, when she needed not to borrow of Marenzio and Palestrina, when her Wilbyes and her Morlands and her Dowlands won the praise of Shakspere and the court. We hear the echo of those songs; and in some towns at Christmas or the New Year old madrigals still sound in praise of Oriana and of Phyllis and the country life. What are called 'waits' are but a poor travesty of those well-sung Elizabethan carols. We turn in our beds half-pitying, half-angered by harsh voices that quaver senseless ditties in the fog, or by tuneless fiddles playing popular airs without propriety or interest.

It is a strange mixture of picturesquely blended elements which the Elizabethan age presents. We see it afar off like the meeting of a hundred streams that grow into a river. We are sailing on the flood long after it has shrunk into a single tide, and the banks are dull and tame, and the all-absorbing ocean is before us. Yet sometimes we hear a murmur of the distant fountains, and Christmas is a day on which for some the many waters of the age of great Elizabeth sound clearest.

The age which followed, was not poetical. The Puritans restrained festivity and art, and hated music. Yet from this period stands out the hymn of Milton, written when he was a youth, but bearing promise of his later muse. At one time, as we read it, we seem to be looking on a picture by some old Italian artist. But no picture can give Milton's music or

make the ‘base of heaven’s deep organ blow.’ Here he touches new associations, and reveals the realm of poetry which it remains for later times to traverse. Milton felt the true sentiment of Northern Christmas when he opened his poem with the ‘winter wild,’ in defiance of historical probability, and what the French call local colouring. Nothing shows how wholly we people of the North have appropriated Christmas, and made it a creature of our own imagination, more than this dwelling on winds and snows and bitter frosts, so alien from the fragrant nights of Palestine. But Milton’s hymn is like a symphony, embracing many thoughts and periods of varying melody. The music of the seraphim brings to his mind the age of gold, and that suggests the judgment and the redemption of the world. Satan’s kingdom fails, the false gods go forth, Apollo leaves his rocky throne, and all the dim Phœnician and Egyptian deities, with those that classic fancy fabled, troop away like ghosts into the darkness. What a swell of stormy sound is in those lines! It recalls the very voice of Pan, which went abroad upon the waters when Christ died, and all the utterances of God on earth, feigned in Delphian shrines, or truly spoken on the sacred hills, were mute for ever.

After Milton came the age which, of all others, is the prosiest in our history. We cannot find much novelty of interest added to Christmas at this time. But there is one piece of poetry that somehow or another seems to belong to the reign of Anne and of the Georges—the poetry of bells. Great civic corporations reigned in those days; churchwardens tyrannised and were rich; and many a goodly chime of bells they hung in our old church-steeple. Let us go into the square room of the belfry, where the clock ticks all day, and the long ropes hang dangling down, with fur upon their hemp for ringers’ hands above the socket set for ringers’ feet. There we may read long lists of gilded names, recording mountainous bob-majors, rung a century ago, with special praise to him

who pulled the tenor-bell, year after year, until he died, and left it to his son. The art of bell-ringing is profound, and requires a long apprenticeship. Even now, in some old cities, the ringers form a guild and mystery. Suppose it to be Christmas-eve in the year 1772. It is now a quarter before twelve, and the sexton has unlocked the church-gates and set the belfry door ajar. Candles are lighted in the room above, and jugs of beer stand ready for the ringers. Up they bustle one by one, and listen to the tickings of the clock that tells the passing minutes. At last it gives a click ; and now they throw off coat and waistcoat, strap their girdles tighter round the waist, and each holds his rope in readiness. Twelve o'clock strikes, and forth across the silent city go the clamorous chimes. The steeple rocks and reels, and far away the night is startled. Damp turbulent west winds, rushing from the distant sea, and swirling up the inland valleys, catch the sound, and toss it to and fro, and bear it by gusts and snatches to watchers far away, upon bleak moorlands and the brows of woody hills. Is there not something dim and strange in the thought of these eight men meeting, in the heart of a great city, in the narrow belfry-room, to stir a mighty sound that shall announce to listening ears miles, miles away, the birth of a new day, and tell to dancers, mourners, students, sleepers, and perhaps to dying men, that Christ is born ?

Let this association suffice for the time. And of our own Christmas so much has been said and sung by better voices, that we may leave it to the feelings and the memories of those who read the fireside tales of Dickens, and are happy in their homes. The many elements which I have endeavoured to recall, mix all of them in the Christmas of the present, partly, no doubt, under the form of vague and obscure sentiment ; partly as time-honoured reminiscences, partly as a portion of our own life. But there is one phase of poetry which we

enjoy more fully than any previous age. That is music. Music is of all the arts the youngest, and of all can free herself most readily from symbols. A fine piece of music moves before us like a living passion, which needs no form or colour, no interpreting associations, to convey its strong but indistinct significance. Each man there finds his soul revealed to him, and enabled to assume a cast of feeling in obedience to the changeful sound. In this manner all our Christmas thoughts and emotions have been gathered up for us by Handel in his drama of the 'Messiah.' To Englishmen it is almost as well known and necessary as the Bible. But only one who has heard its pastoral episode performed year after year from childhood in the hushed cathedral, where pendent lamps or sconces make the gloom of aisle and choir and airy column half intelligible, can invest this music with long associations of accumulated awe. To his mind it brings a scene at midnight of hills clear in the starlight of the East, with white flocks scattered on the down. The breath of winds that come and go, the bleating of the sheep, with now and then a tinkling bell, and now and then the voice of an awakened shepherd, is all that breaks the deep repose. Overhead shimmer the bright stars, and low to west lies the moon, not pale and sickly (he dreams) as in our North, but golden, full, and bathing distant towers and tall aërial palms with floods of light. Such is a child's vision, begotten by the music of the symphony ; and when he wakes from trance at its low silver close, the dark cathedral seems glowing with a thousand angel faces, and all the air is tremulous with angel wings. Then follow the solitary treble voice and the swift chorus.

ANTINOUS.

VISITORS to picture and sculpture galleries are haunted by the forms of two handsome young men—Sebastian and Antinous. Both were saints : the one of decadent Paganism, the other of mythologising Christianity. According to the popular beliefs to which they owed their canonisation, both suffered death in the bloom of earliest manhood for the faith that burned in them. There is, however, this difference between the two—that whereas Sebastian is a shadowy creature of the pious fancy, Antinous preserves a marked and unmistakable personality. All his statues are distinguished by unchanging characteristics. The pictures of Sebastian vary according to the ideal of adolescent beauty conceived by each successive artist. In the frescoes of Perugino and Luini he shines with the pale pure light of saintliness. On the canvas of Sodoma he reproduces the voluptuous charm of youthful Bacchus, with so much of anguish in his martyred features as may serve to heighten his dæmonic fascination. On the richer panels of the Venetian masters he glows with a flame of earthly passion aspiring heavenward. Under Guido's hand he is a model of mere carnal comeliness. And so forth through the whole range of the Italian painters. We know Sebastian only by his arrows. The case is very different with Antinous. Depicted under diverse attributes—as Hermes of the wrestling-ground, as Aristæus or Vertumnus, as Dionysus, as Ganymede, as Herakles, or as a god of ancient Egypt—his individuality is always prominent. No metamor-

phosis of divinity can change the lineaments he wore on earth. And this difference, so marked in the artistic presentation of the two saints, is no less striking in their several histories. The legend of Sebastian tells us nothing to be relied upon, except that he was a Roman soldier converted to the Christian faith, and martyred. In spite of the perplexity and mystery that involve the death of Antinous in impenetrable gloom, he is a true historic personage, no phantom of myth, but a man as real as Hadrian, his master.

Antinous, as he appears in sculpture, is a young man of eighteen or nineteen years, almost faultless in his form. His beauty is not of a pure Greek type. Though perfectly proportioned and developed by gymnastic exercises to the true athletic fulness, his limbs are round and florid, suggesting the possibility of early over-ripeness. The muscles are not trained to sinewy firmness, but yielding and elastic ; the chest is broad and singularly swelling ; and the shoulders are placed so far back from the thorax that the breasts project beyond them in a massive arch. It has been asserted that one shoulder is slightly lower than the other. Some of the busts seem to justify this statement ; but the appearance is due probably to the different position of the two arms, one of which, if carried out, would be lifted and the other be depressed. The legs and arms are modelled with exquisite grace of outline ; yet they do not show that readiness for active service which is noticeable in the statues of the Meleager, the Apoxyomenos, or the Belvedere Hermes. The whole body combines Greek beauty of structure with something of Oriental voluptuousness. The same fusion of diverse elements may be traced in the head. It is not too large, though more than usually broad, and is nobly set upon a massive throat, slightly inclined forwards, as though this posture were habitual ; the hair lies thick in clusters, which only form curls at the tips. The forehead is low and somewhat square ; the eyebrows are level, of a peculiar shape, and very thick, con-

verging so closely as almost to meet above the deep-cut eyes. The nose is straight, but blunter than is consistent with the Greek ideal. Both cheeks and chin are delicately formed, but fuller than a severe taste approves : one might trace in their rounded contours either a survival of infantine innocence and immaturity, or else the sign of rapidly approaching over-bloom. The mouth is one of the loveliest ever carved ; but here again the blending of the Greek and Oriental types is visible. The lips, half parted, seem to pout ; and the distance between mouth and nostrils is exceptionally short. The undefinable expression of the lips, together with the weight of the brows and slumberous half-closed eyes, gives a look of sulkiness or voluptuousness to the whole face. This, I fancy, is the first impression which the portraits of Antinous produce ; and Shelley has well conveyed it by placing the two following phrases, ‘eager and impassioned tenderness’ and ‘effeminate sullenness,’ in close juxtaposition.¹ But, after longer familiarity with the whole range of Antinous’ portraits, and after study of his life, we are brought to read the peculiar expression of his face and form somewhat differently. A prevailing melancholy, sweetness of temperament overshadowed by resignation, brooding reverie, the innocence of youth touched and saddened by a calm resolve or an accepted doom—such are the sentences we form to give distinctness to a still vague and uncertain impression. As we gaze, Virgil’s lines upon the young Marcellus recur to our mind : what seemed sullen, becomes mournful ; the unmistakable voluptuousness is transfigured in tranquillity.

After all is said and written, the statues of Antinous do not render up their secret. Like some of the Egyptian gods with whom he was associated, he remains for us a sphinx, secluded in the shade of a ‘mild mystery.’ His soul, like the Harpoocrates he personated, seems to hold one finger on closed lips,

¹ Fragment, *The Coliseum.*

in token of eternal silence. One thing, however, is certain. We have before us no figment of the artistic imagination, but a real youth of incomparable beauty, just as nature made him, with all the inscrutableness of undeveloped character, with all the pathos of a most untimely doom, with the almost imperceptible imperfections that render choice reality more permanently charming than the ideal. It has been disputed whether the Antinous statues are portraits or idealised works of inventive art ; and it is usually conceded that the sculptors of Hadrian's age were not able to produce a new ideal type. Critics, therefore, like Helbig and Overbeck, arrive at the conclusion that Antinous was one of nature's masterpieces, modelled in bronze, marble, and granite with almost flawless technical dexterity. Without attaching too much weight to this kind of criticism, it is well to find the decisions of experts in harmony with the instincts of simple observers. Antinous is as real as any man who ever sat for his portrait to a modern sculptor.

But who was Antinous, and what is known of him ? He was a native of Bithynium or Claudiopolis, a Greek town claiming to have been a colony from Arcadia, which was situated near the Sangarius, in the Roman province of Bithynia ; therefore he may have had pure Hellenic blood in his veins, or, what is more probable, his ancestry may have been hybrid between the Greek immigrants and the native populations of Asia Minor. Antinous was probably born in the first decade of the second century of our era. About his youth and education we know nothing. He first appears upon the scene of the world's history as Hadrian's friend. Whether the Emperor met with him during his travels in Asia Minor, whether he found him among the students of the University at Athens, or whether the boy had been sent to Rome in his childhood, must remain matter of the merest conjecture. We do not even know for certain whether Antinous was free or a slave. The report that he was one of the Emperor's pages rests upon the

testimony of Hegesippus, quoted by a Christian Father, and cannot therefore be altogether relied upon. It receives, however, some confirmation from the fact that Antinous is more than once represented in the company of Hadrian and Trajan in a page's hunting dress upon the bas-reliefs which adorn the Arch of Constantine. The so-called Antinous-Castor of the Villa Albani is probably of a similar character. Winckelmann, who adopted the tradition as trustworthy, pointed out the similarity between the portraits of Antinous and some lines in Phædrus, which describe a curly-haired *atriensis*. If Antinous took the rank of *atriensis* in the imperial *pædagogium*, his position would have been, to say the least, respectable; for to these upper servants was committed the charge of the *atrium*, where the Romans kept their family archives, portraits, and works of art. Yet he must have quitted this kind of service some time before his death, since we find him in the company of Hadrian upon one of those long journeys in which an *atriensis* would have had no *atrium* to keep. By the time of Hadrian's visit to Egypt, Antinous had certainly passed into the closest relationship with his imperial master ; and what we know of the Emperor's inclination towards literary and philosophical society perhaps justifies the belief that the youth he admitted to his friendship had imbibed Greek culture, and had been initiated into those cloudy metaphysics which amused the leisure of semi-Oriental thinkers in the last age of decaying Paganism.

It was a moment in the history of the human mind when East and West were blending their traditions to form the husk of Christian creeds and the fantastic visions of Neoplatonism. Rome herself had received with rapture the strange rites of Nilotic and of Syrian superstition. Alexandria was the forge of fanciful imaginations, the majority of which were destined to pass like vapours and leave not a wrack behind, while a few fastened with the force of dogma on the conscience of awakening Christendom. During Hadrian's reign it was still un-

certain which among the many hybrid products of that motley age would live and flourish ; and the Emperor, we know, dreamed fondly of reviving the cults and restoring the splendour of degenerate Hellas. At the same time he was not averse to the more mystic rites of Egypt : in his villa at Tivoli he built a Serapeum, and named one of its quarters Canopus. What part Antinous may have taken in the projects of his friend and master we know not ; yet, when we come to consider the circumstances of his death, it may not be superfluous to have thus touched upon the intellectual conditions of the world in which he lived. The mixed blood of the boy, born and bred in a Greek city near the classic ground of Dindymean rites, and his beauty, blent of Hellenic and Eastern qualities, may also not unprofitably be remembered. In such a youth, nurtured between Greece and Asia, admitted to the friendship of an emperor for whom Neo-Hellenism was a life's dream in the midst of grave state-cares, influenced by the dark and symbolical creeds of a dimly apprehended East, might there not have lurked some spark of enthusiasm combining the impulses of Atys and Aristogeiton, pathetic even in its inefficiency when judged by the light of modern knowledge, but heroic at that moment in its boundless vista of great deeds to be accomplished ?

After journeying through Greece, Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine, and Arabia, Hadrian, attended by Antinous, came to Egypt. He there restored the tomb of Pompey, near Pelusium, with great magnificence, and shortly afterwards embarked from Alexandria upon the Nile, proceeding on his journey through Memphis into the Thebaïd. When he had arrived near an ancient city named Besa, on the right bank of the river, he lost his friend. Antinous was drowned in the Nile. He had thrown himself, it was believed, into the water ; seeking thus by a voluntary death to substitute his own life for Hadrian's, and to avert predicted perils from the Roman Empire. What these

perils were, and whether Hadrian was ill, or whether an oracle had threatened him with approaching calamity, we do not know. Even supposition is at fault, because the date of the event is still uncertain ; some authorities placing Hadrian's Egyptian journey in the year 122, and others in the year 130 A.D. Of the two dates, the second seems the more probable. We are left to surmise that, if the Emperor was in danger, the recent disturbances which followed a new discovery of Apis, may have exposed him to fanatical conspiracy. The same doubt affects an ingenious conjecture that rumours which reached the Roman court of a new rising in Judæa had disturbed the Emperor's mind, and led to the belief that he was on the verge of a mysterious doom. He had pacified the Empire and established its administration on a solid basis. Yet the revolt of the indomitable Jews—more dreaded since the days of Titus than any other perturbation of the imperial economy—would have been enough, especially in Egypt, to engender general uneasiness. However this may have been, the grief of the Emperor, intensified either by gratitude or remorse, led to the immediate canonisation of Antinous. The city where he died was rebuilt, and named after him. His worship as a hero and as a god spread far and wide throughout the provinces of the Mediterranean. A new star, which appeared about the time of his decease, was supposed to be his soul received into the company of the immortals. Medals were struck in his honour, and countless works of art were produced to make his memory undying. Great cities wore wreaths of red lotos on his feast-day in commemoration of the manner of his death. Public games were celebrated in his honour at the city Antinoë, and also in Arcadian Mantinea. This canonisation may probably have taken place in the fourteenth year of Hadrian's reign, A.D. 130.¹ Antinous continued to be worshipped until the reign of Valentinian.

¹ Overbeck, Hausrath and Mommsen, following apparently the con-

Thus far I have told a simple story, as though the details of the youth's last days were undisputed. Still we are as yet but on the threshold of the subject. All that we have any right to take for uncontested is that Antinous passed from this life near the city of Besa, called thereafter Antinoopolis or Antinoë. Whether he was drowned by accident, whether he drowned himself in order to save Hadrian by vicarious suffering, or whether Hadrian sacrificed him in order to extort the secrets of fate from blood-propitiated deities, remains a question buried in the deepest gloom. With a view to throwing such light as is possible upon the matter, we must proceed to summon in their order the most trustworthy authorities among the ancients.

Dion Cassius takes precedence. In compiling his life of Hadrian, he had beneath his eyes the Emperor's own 'Commentaries,' published under the name of the freedman Phlegon. We therefore learn from him at least what the friend of Antinous wished the world to know about his death; and though this does not go for much, since Hadrian is himself an accused person in the suit before us, yet the whole Roman Empire may be said to have accepted his account, and based on it a pious cult that held its own through the next three centuries of growing Christianity. Dion, in the abstract of his history compiled by Xiphilinus, speaks then to this effect: 'In Egypt he also built the city named after Antinous. Now Antinous was a native of Bithynium, a city of Bithynia, which we also

clusions arrived at by Flemmer in his work on Hadrian's journeys, place it in 130 A.D. This would leave an interval of only eight years between the deaths of Antinous and Hadrian. It may here be observed that two medals of Antinous, referred by Rasche with some hesitation to the Egyptian series, bear the dates of the eighth and ninth years of Hadrian's reign. If these coins are genuine, and if we accept Flemmer's conclusions, they must have been struck in the lifetime of Antinous. Neither of them represents Antinous with the insignia of deity: one gives the portrait of Hadrian upon the reverse.

call Claudiopolis. He was Hadrian's favourite, and he died in Egypt : whether by having fallen into the Nile, as Hadrian writes, or by having been sacrificed, as the truth was. For Hadrian, as I have said, was in general overmuch given to superstitious subtleties, and practised all kinds of sorceries and magic arts. At any rate he so honoured Antinous, whether because of the love he felt for him, or because he died voluntarily, since a willing victim was needed for his purpose, that he founded a city in the place where he met this fate, and called it after him, and dedicated statues, or rather images, of him in, so to speak, the whole inhabited world. Lastly, he affirmed that a certain star which he saw was the star of Antinous, and listened with pleasure to the myths invented by his companions about this star having really sprung from the soul of his favourite, and having then for the first time appeared. For which things he was laughed at.'

We may now hear what Spartian, in his '*Vita Hadriani*,' has to say :—'He lost his favourite, Antinous, while sailing on the Nile, and lamented him like a woman. About Antinous reports vary, for some say that he devoted his life for Hadrian, while others hint what his condition seems to prove, as well as Hadrian's excessive inclination to luxury. Some Greeks, at the instance of Hadrian, canonised him, asserting that oracles were given by him, which Hadrian himself is supposed to have made up.'

In the third place comes Aurelius Victor :—'Others maintain that this sacrifice of Antinous was both pious and religious ; for when Hadrian was wishing to prolong his life, and the magicians required a voluntary vicarious victim, they say that, upon the refusal of all others, Antinous offered himself.'

These are the chief authorities. In estimating them we must remember that, though Dion Cassius wrote less than a century after the event narrated, he has come down to us merely in fragments and in the epitome of a Byzantine of the twelfth century, when everything that could possibly be

done to discredit the worship of Antinous, and to blacken the memory of Hadrian, had been attempted by the Christian Fathers. On the other hand, Spartianus and Aurelius Victor compiled their histories at too distant a date to be of first-rate value. Taking the three reports together, we find that antiquity differed about the details of Antinous's death. Hadrian himself averred that his friend was drowned ; and it was surmised that he had drowned himself in order to prolong his master's life. The courtiers, however, who had scoffed at Hadrian's fondness for his favourite, and had laughed to see his sorrow for his death, somewhat illogically came to the conclusion that Antinous had been immolated by the Emperor, either because a victim was needed to prolong his life, or because some human sacrifice was required in order to complete a dark mysterious magic rite. Dion, writing not very long after the event, believed that Antinous had been immolated for some such purpose with his own consent. Spartian, who wrote at the distance of more than a century, felt uncertain about the question of self-devotion ; but Aurelius Victor, following after the interval of another century, unhesitatingly adopted Dion's view, and gave it a fresh colour. This opinion he summarised in a compact, authoritative form, upon which we may perhaps found an assumption that the belief in Antinous, as a self-devoted victim, had been gradually growing through two centuries.

There are therefore three hypotheses to be considered. The first is that Antinous died an accidental death by drowning ; the second is, that Antinous, in some way or another, gave his life willingly for Hadrian's ; the third is, that Hadrian ordered his immolation in the performance of magic rites.

For the first of the three hypotheses we have the authority of Hadrian himself, as quoted by Dion. The simple words *εἰς τὸν Νεῖλον ἐκπεσὼν* imply no more than accidental death ; and yet, if the Emperor had believed the story of his favourite's self-devotion, it is reasonable to suppose that he would have re-

corded it in his 'Memoirs.' Accepting this view of the case, we must refer the deification of Antinous wholly to Hadrian's affection ; and the tales of his *devotio* may have been invented partly to flatter the Emperor's grief, partly to explain its violence to the Roman world. This hypothesis seems, indeed, by far the most natural of the three ; and if we could strip the history of Antinous of its mysterious and mythic elements, it is rational to believe that we should find his death a simple accident. Yet our authorities prove that writers of history among the ancients wavered between the two other theories of (i.) Self-Devotion and (ii.) Immolation, with a bias toward the latter. These, then, have now to be considered with some attention. Both, it may parenthetically be observed, relieve Antinous from a moral stigma, since in either case a pure untainted victim was required.

If we accept the former of the two remaining hypotheses, we can understand how love and gratitude, together with sorrow, led Hadrian to canonise Antinous. If we accept the latter, Hadrian's sorrow itself becomes inexplicable ; and we must attribute the foundation of Antinoë and the deification of Antinous to remorse. It may be added, while balancing these two solutions of the problem, that cynical sophists, like Hadrian's Græculi, were likely to have put the worst construction on the Emperor's passion, and to have invented the worst stories concerning the favourite's death. To perpetuate these calumnious reports was the real interest of the Christian apologists, who not unnaturally thought it scandalous that a handsome page should be deified. Thus, at first sight, the balance of probability inclines toward the former of the two solutions, while the second may be rejected as based upon court-gossip and religious animosity. Attention may also again be called to the fact that Hadrian ventured to publish an account of Antinous quite inconsistent with what Dion chose to call the truth, and that virtuous Emperors like the Antonines did not

interfere with a cult, which, had it been paid to the mere victim of Hadrian's passion and his superstition, would have been an infamy even in Rome. Moreover, that cult was not, like the creations of the impious emperors, forgotten or destroyed by public acclamation. It took root and flourished apparently, as we shall see, because it satisfied some craving of the popular religious sense, and because the people believed that this man had died for his friend. It will not, however, do to dismiss the two hypotheses so lightly.

The alternative of self-devotion presents itself under a double aspect. Antinous may either have committed suicide by drowning with the intention of prolonging the Emperor's life, or he may have offered himself as a voluntary victim to the magicians, who required a sacrifice for a similar purpose. Spartian's brief phrase, *aliis eum devotum pro Hadriano*, may seem to point to the first form of self-devotion ; the testimony of Aurelius Victor clearly supports the second : yet it does not much matter which of the two explanations we adopt. The point is whether Antinous gave his life willingly to save the Emperor's, or whether he was murdered for the satisfaction of some superstitious curiosity. It was absolutely necessary that the vicarious victim should make a free and voluntary oblation of himself. That the notion of vicarious suffering was familiar to the ancients is sufficiently attested by the phrases *ἀντιψυχοι*, *ἀνταρδοι*, and *hostia succilanea*. We find traces of it in the legend of Alcestis, who died for Admetus, and of Cheiron, who took the place of Prometheus in Hades. Suetonius records that in the first days of Caligula's popularity, when he was labouring under dangerous illness, many Romans of both sexes vowed their lives for his recovery in temples of the gods. That this superstition retained a strong hold on the popular imagination in the time of Hadrian is proved by the curious affirmation of Aristides, a contemporary of that Emperor. He says that once, when he was ill, a certain Philu-

mene offered her soul for his soul, her body for his body, and that, upon his own recovery, she died. On the same testimony it appears that her brother Hermeas had also died for Aristides. This faith in the efficacy of substitution is persistent in the human race. Not long ago a Christian lady was supposed to have vowed her own life for the prolongation of that of Pope Pius IX., and good Catholics inclined to the belief that the sacrifice had been accepted. We shall see that in the first centuries of Christendom the popular conviction that Antinous had died for Hadrian brought him into inconvenient rivalry with Christ, whose vicarious suffering was the cardinal point of the new creed.

The alternative of immolation has next to be considered. The question before us here is, Did Hadrian sacrifice Antinous for the satisfaction of a superstitious curiosity, and in the performance of magic rites? Dion Cassius uses the word *ἱερουργηθεὶς*, and explains it by saying that Hadrian needed a voluntary human victim for the accomplishment of an act of divination in which he was engaged. Both Spartian and Dion speak emphatically of the Emperor's proclivities to the black art; and all antiquity agreed about this trait in his character. Ammianus Marcellinus spoke of him as '*futurorum sciscitationi nimiæ deditum.*' Tertullian described him as '*curiositatum omnium exploratorem.*' To multiply such phrases would, however, be superfluous, for they are probably mere repetitions from the text of Dion. That human victims were used by the Romans of the Empire seems certain. Lampridius, in the 'Life of Heliogabalus,' records his habit of slaying handsome and noble youths, in order that he might inspect their entrails. Eusebius, in his 'Life of Maxentius,' asserts the same of that Emperor. *Quum inspiceret exta pueriia, νεογυῶν σπλάγχνα βρέφων διερευνομένου,* are the words used by Lampridius and Eusebius. Justin Martyr speaks of *ἐποπτεύσεις παιῶν αἰδιαφθόρων.* Caracalla and Julian are credited with similar bloody

sacrifices. Indeed, it may be affirmed in general that tyrants have ever been eager to foresee the future and to extort her secrets from Fate, stopping short at no crime in the attempt to quiet a corroding anxiety for their own safety. What we read about Italian despots—Ezzelino da Romano, Sigismondo Malatesta, Filippo Maria Visconti, and Pier Luigi Farnese—throws light upon the practice of their Imperial predecessors ; while the mysterious murder of the beautiful Astorre Manfredi by the Borgias in Hadrian's Mausoleum has been referred by modern critics of authority to the same unholy curiosity. That Hadrian laboured under this moral disease, and that he deliberately used the body of Antinous for *extispicium*, is, I think, Dion's opinion. But are we justified in reckoning Hadrian among these tyrants ? That must depend upon our view of his character.

Hadrian was a man in whom the most conflicting qualities were blent. In his youth and through his whole life he was passionately fond of hunting ; hardy, simple in his habits, marching bareheaded with his legions through German frost and Nubian heat, sharing the food of his soldiers, and exercising the most rigid military discipline. At the same time he has aptly been described as ‘the most sumptuous character of antiquity.’ He filled the cities of the Empire with showy buildings, and passed his last years in a kind of classic Munich, where he had constructed imitations of every celebrated monument in Europe. He was so far fond of nature that, anticipating the most recently developed of modern tastes, he ascended Mount *Ætna* and the Mons Casius, in order to enjoy the spectacle of sunrise. In his villa at Tivoli he indulged a trivial fancy by christening one garden Tempe and another the Elysian Fields ; and he had his name carved on the statue of the vocal Memnon with no less gusto than a modern tourist : *audiri voces divinas*. His memory was prodigious, his eloquence in the Latin language studied and yet forcible, his

knowledge of Greek literature and philosophy far from contemptible. He enjoyed the society of Sophists and distinguished rhetoricians, and so far affected authorship as to win the unenviable title of *Græculus* in his own lifetime : yet he never neglected state affairs. Owing to his untiring energy and vast capacity for business, he not only succeeded in re-organising every department of the empire, social, political, fiscal, military, and municipal ; but he also held in his own hands the threads of all its complicated machinery. He was strict in matters of routine, and appears to have been almost a martinet among his legions : yet in social intercourse he lived on terms of familiarity with inferiors, combining the graces of elegant conversation with the *bonhomie* of boon companionship, displaying a warm heart to his friends, and using magnificent generosity. He restored the domestic as well as the military discipline of the Roman world ; and his code of laws lasted till Justinian. Among many of his useful measures of reform he issued decrees restricting the power of masters over their slaves, and depriving them of their old capital jurisdiction. His biographers find little to accuse him of beyond a singular avidity for fame, addiction to magic arts and luxurious vices : yet they adduce no proof of his having, at any rate before the date of his final retirement to his Tiburtine villa, shared the crimes of a Nero or a Commodus. On the whole, we must recognise in Hadrian a nature of extraordinary energy, capacity for administrative government, and mental versatility. A certain superficiality, vulgarity, and commonplaceness seems to have been forced upon him by the circumstances of his age, no less than by his special temperament. This quality of the immitigable commonplace is clearly written on his many portraits. Their chief interest consists in a fixed expression of fatigue—as though the man were weary with much seeking and with little finding. In all things, he was somewhat of a dilettante ; and the Nemesis of that sensibility to impressions

which distinguishes the dilettante, came upon him ere he died. He ended his days in an appalling and persistent paroxysm of *ennui*, desiring the death which would not come to his relief.

The whole creative and expansive force of Hadrian's century lay concealed in the despised Christian sect. Art was expiring in a sunset blaze of gorgeous imitation, tasteless grandeur, technical elaboration. Philosophy had become sophistical or mystic ; its real life survived only in the phrase ‘entbehren sollst du, sollst entbehren’ of the Stoics. Literature was repetitive and scholastic. Tacitus, Suetonius, Plutarch, and Juvenal indeed were living ; but their works formed the last great literary triumph of the age. Religion had degenerated under the twofold influences of scepticism and intrusive foreign cults. It was, in truth, an age in which, for a sound heart and manly intellect, there lay no proper choice except between the stoicism of Marcus Aurelius and the Christianity of the Catacombs. All else had passed into shams, unrealities, and visions. Now Hadrian was neither stoical nor Christian, though he so far coquettled with Christianity as to build temples dedicated to no Pagan deity, which passed in after times for unfinished churches. He was a *Graculus*. In that contemptuous epithet, stripping it of its opprobrious significance, we find the real key to his character. In a failing age he lived a restless-minded, many-sided soldier-prince, whose inner hopes and highest aspirations were for Hellas. Hellas, her art, her history, her myths, her literature, her lovers, her young heroes filled him with enthusiasm. To rebuild her ruined cities, to restore her deities, to revive her golden life of blended poetry and science, to reconstruct her spiritual empire as he had reorganised the Roman world, was Hadrian's dream. It was indeed a dream ; one which a far more creative genius than Hadrian's could not have realised.

But now, returning to the two alternatives regarding his friend's death : was this philo-Hellenic Emperor the man to have

immolated Antinous for *extispicium* and then deified him? Probably not. The discord between this bloody act and subsequent hypocrisy upon the one hand, and Hadrian's Greek sympathies upon the other, must be reckoned too strong for even such a dipsychic character as his. There is nothing in either Spartian or Dion to justify the opinion that he was naturally cruel or fantastically deceitful. On the other hand, Hadrian's philo-Hellenic, splendour-loving, somewhat tawdry, fame-desiring nature was precisely of the sort to jump eagerly at the deification of a favourite who had either died a natural death or killed himself to save his master. Hadrian had loved Antinous with a Greek passion in his lifetime. The Roman Emperor was half a god. He remembered how Zeus had loved Ganymede, and raised him to Olympus; how Achilles had loved Patroclus, and performed his funeral rites at Troy; how the demigod Alexander had loved Hephaestion, and lifted him into a hero's seat on high. He, Hadrian, would do the like, now that death had robbed him of his comrade. The Roman, who surrounded himself at Tivoli with copies of Greek temples, and who called his garden Tempe, played thus at being Zeus, Achilles, Alexander; and the civilised world humoured his whim. Though the Sophists scoffed at his real grief and honourable tears, they consecrated his lost favourite, found out a star for him, carved him in breathing brass, and told tales about his sacred flower. Pancrates was entertained in Alexandria at the public cost for his fable of the lotos; and the lyrist Mesomedes received so liberal a pension for his hymn to Antinous that Antoninus Pius found it needful to curtail it.

After weighing the authorities, considering the circumstances of the age, and estimating Hadrian's character, I am thus led to reject the alternative of immolation. Spartian's own words, *quem muliebriter flevit*, as well as the subsequent acts of the Emperor and the acquiescence of the whole world in the new deity, prove to my mind that in the suggestion of

extispicium we have one of those covert calumnies which it is impossible to set aside at this distance of time, and which render the history of Roman Emperors and Popes almost impracticable.

The case, then, stands before us thus. Antinous was drowned in the Nile, near Besa, either by accident or by voluntary suicide to save his master's life. Hadrian's love for him had been unmeasured, so was his grief. Both of them were genuine ; but in the nature of the man there was something artificial. He could not be content to love and grieve alone ; he must needs enact the part of Alexander, and realise, if only by a sort of makebelieve, a portion of his Greek ideal. Antinous, the beautiful servant, was to take the place of Ganymede, of Patroclus, of Hephaestion ; never mind if Hadrian was a Roman and his friend a Bithynian, and if the love between them, as between an emperor of fifty and a boy of nineteen, had been less than heroic. The opportunity was too fair to be missed ; the rôle too fascinating to be rejected. The world, in spite of covert sneers, lent itself to the sham, and Antinous became a god.

The uniformly contemptuous tone of antique authorities almost obliges us to rank this deification of Antinous, together with the Tiburtine villa and the dream of a Hellenic Renaissance, among the part-shams, part-enthusiasms of Hadrian's 'sumptuous' character. Spartian's account of the consecration, and his hint that Hadrian composed the oracles delivered at his favourite's tomb ; Arrian's letter to the Emperor describing the island Leukè and flattering him by an adroit comparison with Achilles ; the poem by Pancrates mentioned in the *Deip-nosophistæ*, which furnished the myth of a new lotos dedicated to Antinous ; the invention of the star, and Hadrian's conversations with his courtiers on this subject—all converge to form the belief that something of consciously unreal mingled with this act of apotheosis by Imperial decree. Hadrian sought to

assuage his grief by paying his favourite illustrious honours after death ; he also desired to give the memory of his own love the most congenial and poetical environment, to feed upon it in the daintiest places, and to deck it with the prettiest flowers of fancy. He therefore canonised Antinous, and took measures for disseminating his cult throughout the world, careless of the element of imposture which might seem to mingle with the consecration of his true affection. Hadrian's superficial taste was not offended by the gimcrack quality of the new god ; and Antinous was saved from being a merely pinchbeck saint by his own charming personality.

This will not, however, wholly satisfy the conditions of the problem ; and we are obliged to ask ourselves whether there was not something in the character of Antinous himself, something divinely inspired and irradiate with spiritual beauty, apparent to his fellows and remembered after his mysterious death, which justified his canonisation, and removed it from the region of Imperial makebelieve. If this was not the case, if Antinous died like a flower cropped from the seraglio garden of the court-pages, how should the Emperor in the first place have bewailed him with ‘unhusbanded passion,’ and the people afterwards have received him as a god ? May it not have been that he was a youth of more than ordinary promise, gifted with intellectual enthusiasms proportioned to his beauty and endowed with something of Phœbean inspiration, who, had he survived, might have even inaugurated a new age for the world, or have emulated the heroism of Hypatia in a hopeless cause ? Was the link between him and Hadrian formed less by the boy’s beauty than by his marvellous capacity for apprehending and his fitness for realising the Emperor’s Greek dreams ? Did the spirit of Neoplatonism find in him congenial incarnation ? At any rate, was there not enough in the then current beliefs about the future of the soul, as abundantly set forth in Plutarch’s writings, to justify a convic-

tion that after death he had already passed into the lunar sphere, awaiting the final apotheosis of purged spirits in the sun? These questions may be asked—indeed, they must be asked—for, without suggesting them, we leave the worship of Antinous an almost inexplicable scandal, an almost unintelligible blot on human nature. Unless we ask them, we must be content to echo the coarse and violent diatribes of Clemens Alexandrinus against the vigils of the deified *exoletus*. But they cannot be answered, for antiquity is altogether silent about him; only here and there, in the indignant utterance of a Christian Father, stung to the quick by Pagan parallels between Antinous and Christ, do we catch a perverted echo of the popular emotion upon which his cult reposed, which recognised his godhood or his vicarious self-sacrifice, and which paid enduring tribute to the sublimity of his young life untimely quenched.

The *senatus consultum* required for the apotheosis of an Emperor was not, so far as we know, obtained in the case of Antinous. Hadrian's determination to exalt his favourite sufficed; and this is perhaps one of the earliest instances of those informal deifications which became common in the later Roman period. Antinous was canonised according to Greek ritual and by Greek priests: *Græci quidam volente Hadriano eum consecraverunt*. How this was accomplished we know not; but forms of canonisation must have been in common usage, seeing that emperors and members of the Imperial family received the honour in due course. The star, which was supposed to have appeared soon after his death, and which represented his soul admitted to Olympus, was somewhere near the constellation Aquila, according to Ptolemy, but not part of it. I believe the letters η . θ . ι . κ . λ . of Aquila now bear the name of Antinous; but this appropriation dates only from the time of Tycho Brahe. It was also asserted that as a new star had appeared in the skies, so a new flower had blossomed on

the earth, at the moment of his death. This was the lotos, of a peculiar red colour, which the people of Lower Egypt used to wear in wreaths upon his festival. It received the name Antinoeian ; and the Alexandrian sophist, Pancrates, seeking to pay a double compliment to Hadrian and his favourite, wrote a poem in which he pretended that this lily was stained with the blood of a Libyan lion slain by the Emperor. As Arrian compared his master to Achilles, so Pancrates flattered him with allusions to Herakles. The lotos, it is well known, was a sacred flower in Egypt. Both as a symbol of the all-nourishing moisture of the earth and of the mystic marriage of Isis and Osiris, and also as an emblem of immortality, it appeared on all the sacred places of the Egyptians, especially on tombs and funeral utensils. To dignify Antinous with the lotos emblem was to consecrate him ; to find a new species of the revered blossom and to wear it in his honour, calling it by his name, was to exalt him to the company of gods. Nothing, as it seems, had been omitted that could secure for him the patent of divinity.

He met his death near the city Besa, an ancient Egyptian town upon the eastern bank of the Nile, almost opposite to Hermopolis. Besa was the name of a local god, who gave oracles and predicted future events. But of this Besa we know next to nothing. Hadrian determined to rebuild the city, change its name, and let his favourite take the place of the old deity. Accordingly, he raised a splendid new town in the Greek style ; furnished it with temples, agora, hippodrome, gymnasium, and baths ; filled it with Greek citizens ; gave it a Greek constitution, and named it Antinoë. This new town, whether called Antinoë, Antinoopolis, Antinous, Antinoëia, or even Besantinous (for its titles varied), continued long to flourish, and was mentioned by Ammianus Marcellinus, together with Copton and Hermopolis, as one of the three most distinguished cities of the Thebaïd. In the age of Julian these three cities were

perhaps the only still thriving towns of Upper Egypt. It has even been maintained on Ptolemy's authority that Antinoë was the metropolis of a nome, called Antinoeitis ; but this is doubtful, since inscriptions discovered among the ruins of the town record no name of nomarch or strategus, while they prove the government to have consisted of a Boulè and a Prytaneus, who was also the Eponymous Magistrate. Strabo reckons it, together with Ptolemais and Alexandria, as governed after the Greek municipal system.

In this city Antinous was worshipped as a god. Though a Greek god, and the eponym of a Greek city, he inherited the place and functions of an Egyptian deity, and was here represented in the hieratic style of Ptolemaic sculpture. A fine specimen of this statuary is preserved in the Vatican, showing how the Neohellenic sculptors had succeeded in maintaining the likeness of Antinous without sacrificing the traditional manner of Egyptian piety. The sacred emblems of Egyptian deities were added : we read, for instance, in one passage, that his shrine contained a boat. This boat, like the mystic egg of Erôs or the cista of Dionysos, symbolised the embryo of cosmic life. It was specially appropriated to Osiris, and suggested collateral allusions doubtless to immortality and the soul's journey in another world. Antinous had a college of priests appointed to his service ; and oracles were delivered from the cenotaph inside his temple. The people believed him to be a genius of warning, gracious to his suppliants, but terrible to evil-doers, combining the qualities of the avenging and protective deities. Annual games were celebrated in Antinoë on his festival, with chariot races and gymnastic contests ; and the fashion of keeping his day seems, from Athenaeus's testimony, to have spread through Egypt. An inscription in Greek characters discovered at Rome upon the Campus Martius entitles Antinous a colleague of the gods in Egypt—

ΑΝΤΙΝΟΩΙ ΣΥΝΘΡΟΝΩΙ ΤΩΝ ΕΝ ΑΙΓΥΠΤΩΙ ΘΕΩΝ.

The worship of Antinous spread rapidly through the Greek and Asian provinces, especially among the cities which owed debts of gratitude to Hadrian or expected from him future favours. At Athens, for example, the Emperor, attended perhaps by Antinous, had presided as Archon during his last royal progress, had built a suburb called after his name, and raised a splendid temple to Olympian Jove. The Athenians, therefore, founded games and a priesthood in honour of the new divinity. Even now, in the Dionysiac theatre, among the chairs above the orchestra assigned to priests of elder deities and more august tradition, may be found one bearing the name of Antinous—IEPEΩΣ ANTINOΟΥ. A marble tablet has also been discovered inscribed with the names of agonothetai for the games celebrated in honour of Antinous ; and a stele exists engraved with the crown of these contests together with the crowns of Severus, Commodus, and Antoninus. It appears that the games in honour of Antinous took place both at Eleusis and at Athens ; and that the agonothetai, as also the priest of the new god, were chosen from the Ephebi. The Corinthians, the Argives, the Achaians, and the Epirots, as we know from coins issued by the priests of Antinous, adopted his cult ;¹ but the region of Greece proper where it flourished most was Arcadia, the mother state of his Bithynian birthplace. Pausanias, who lived contemporaneously with Antinous, and might have seen him, though he tells us that he had not chanced to meet the youth alive, mentions the temple of Antinous at Mantinea as the newest in that city. ‘The Mantineans,’ he says, ‘reckon Antinous among their gods.’ He then describes the yearly festival and mysteries connected with his cult, the quinquennial games established in his honour, and his statues. The gymnasium had a cell dedicated to Antinous, adorned with pictures and fair stone-work. The new god was in the habit of Dionysus.

¹ For example :

ΟΣΤΙΛΙΟΣ ΜΑΡΚΕΛΛΟΣ ΙΕΡΕΤΣ ΤΟΥ ΑΝΤΙΝΟΟΥ ΑΝΕΘΗΚΕ ΤΟΙΣ ΑΧΑΙΟΙΣ
and a similar inscription for Corinth.

As was natural, his birthplace paid him special observance. Coins dedicated by the province of Bithynia, as well as by the town Bithynium, are common, with the epigraphs, ANTINOÖY Η ΠΑΤΡΙΣ and ANTINOON ΘΕΟΝ Η ΠΑΤΡΙΣ. Among the cities of Asia Minor and the vicinity the new cult seems to have been widely spread. Adramyttene in Mysia, Alabanda, Ancyra in Galatia, Chalcedon, Cuma in Æolis, Cyzicum in Mysia, the Ciani, the Hadrianotheritæ of Bithynia, Hierapolis in Phrygia, Nicomedia, Philadelphia, Sardis, Smyrna, Tarsus, the Tianians of Paphlagonia, and a town Rhesæna in Mesopotamia, all furnish their quota of medals. On the majority of these medals he is entitled *Herōs*, but on others he has the higher title of god; and he seems to have been associated in each place with some deity of local fame.

Being essentially a Greek hero, or divinised man received into the company of immortals and worshipped with the attributes of god, his cult took firmer root among the Neohellenic provinces of the Empire than in Italy. Yet there are signs that even in Italy he found his votaries. Among these may first be mentioned the comparative frequency of his name in Roman inscriptions, which have no immediate reference to him, but prove that parents gave it to their children. The discovery of his statues in various cities of the Roman Campagna shows that his cult was not confined to one or two localities. Naples in particular, which remained in all essential points a Greek city, seems to have received him with acclamation. A quarter of the town was called after his name, and a phratria of priests was founded in connection with his worship. The Neapolitans owed much to the patronage of Hadrian, and they repaid him after this fashion. At the beginning of the last century Raffaello Fabretti discovered an inscription near the Porta S. Sebastiano at Rome, which throws some light on the matter. It records the name of a Roman knight, Sufenas, who had held the office of Lupercus and had been a fellow of the Neapolitan phratria.

of Antinous—*fretriaco Neapoli Antinoiton et Eunostidon*. Eunostos was a hero worshipped at Tanagra in Boeotia, where he had a sacred grove no female foot might enter; and the wording of the inscription leaves it doubtful whether the Eunostidae and Antinoitae of Naples were two separate colleges, or whether the heroes were associated as the common patrons of one brotherhood.

A valuable inscription discovered in 1816 near the Baths at Lanuvium or Lavigna shows that Antinous was here associated with Diana as the saint of a benefit club. The rules of the confraternity prescribe the payments and other contributions of its members, provide for their assembling on the feast days of their patrons, fix certain fines, and regulate the ceremonies and expenses of their funerals. This club seems to have resembled modern burial societies, as known to us in England; or still more closely to have been formed upon the same model as Italian confraternite of the Middle Ages. The Lex, or table of regulations, was drawn up in the year 153 A.D. It fixes the birthday of Antinous as v. k. Decembr., and alludes to the temple of Antinous—*Tetrastylo Antinoi*. Probably we cannot build much on the birthday as a genuine date, for the same table gives the birthday of Diana; and what was wanted was not accuracy in such matters, but a settled anniversary for banquets and pious celebrations. When we come to consider the divinity of Antinous, it will be of service to remember that at Lanuvium, together with Diana of the nether world, he was reckoned among the saints of sepulture. Could this thought have penetrated the imagination of his worshippers: that since Antinous had given his life for his friend, since he had faced death and triumphed over it, winning immortality and godhood for himself by sacrifice, the souls of his votaries might be committed to his charge and guidance on their journey through the darkness of the tomb? Could we venture to infer thus much from his selection by a confraternity existing for the

purpose of securing decent burial or pious funeral rites, the date of its formation, so soon after his death, would confirm the hypothesis that he was known to have devoted his life for Hadrian.

While speaking of Antinous as a divinised man, adscript to the gods of Egypt, accepted as hero and as god in Hellas, Italy, and Asia Minor, we have not yet considered the nature of his deity. The question is not so simple as it seems at first sight : and the next step to take, with a view to its solution, is to consider the various forms under which he was adored—the phases of his divinity. The coins already mentioned, and the numerous works of glyptic art surviving in the galleries of Europe, will help us to place ourselves at the same point of view as the least enlightened of his antique votaries. Reasoning upon these data by the light of classic texts, may afterwards enable us to assign him his true place in the Pantheon of decadent and uninventive Paganism.

In Egypt, as we have already seen, Antinous was worshipped by the Neohellenes of Antinoopolis as their Eponymous Hero ; but he took the place of an elder native god, and was represented in art according to the traditions of Egyptian sculpture. The marble statue of the Vatican is devoid of hieratic emblems. Antinous is attired with the Egyptian head-dress and waistband : he holds a short truncheon firmly clasped in each hand ; and by his side is a palm-stump, such as one often finds in statues of the Greek Hermes. Two colossal statues of red granite discovered in the ruins of Hadrian's villa, at Tivoli, represent him in like manner with the usual Egyptian head-dress. They seem to have been designed for pillars supporting the architrave of some huge portal ; and the wands grasped firmly in both hands are supposed to be symbolical of the genii called Dii Averrunci. Von Levezow, in his monograph upon Antinous in art, catalogues five statues of a similar description to the three already mentioned. From the indistinct

character of all of them, it would appear that Antinous was nowhere identified with any one of the great Egyptian deities, but was treated as a Dæmon powerful to punish and protect. This designation corresponds to the contemptuous rebuke addressed by Origen to Celsus, where he argues that the new saint was only a malignant and vengeful spirit. His Egyptian medals are few and of questionable genuineness : the majority of them seem to be purely Hellenic ; but on one he bears a crown like that of Isis, and on another a lotos wreath. The dim records of his cult in Egypt, and the remnants of Græco-Egyptian art, thus mark him out as one of the Averruncan deities, associated perhaps with Kneph or the Agathodæmon of Hellenic mythology, or approximated to Anubis, the Egyptian Hermes. Neither statues nor coins throw much light upon his precise place among those gods of Nile whose throne he is said to have ascended. Egyptian piety may not have been so accommodating as that of Hellas.

With the Græco-Roman world the case is different. We obtain a clearer conception of the Antinous divinity, and recognise him always under the mask of youthful gods already honoured with fixed ritual. To worship even living men under the names and attributes of well-known deities was no new thing in Hellas. We may remember the Ithyphallic hymn with which the Athenians welcomed Demetrius Poliorkêtès, the marriage of Anthony as Dionysus to Athenè, and the deification of Mithridates as Bacchus. The Roman Emperors had already been represented in art with the characteristics of gods —Nero, for example, as Phœbus, and Hadrian as Mars. Such compliments were freely paid to Antinous. On the Achaian coins we find his portrait on the obverse, with different types of Hermes on the reverse, varied in one case by the figure of a ram, in another by the representation of a temple, in a third by a nude hero grasping a spear. One Mysian medal, bearing the epigraph ‘Antinous Iacchus,’ represents him crowned with

ivy, and exhibits Demeter on the reverse. A single specimen from Ancyra, with the legend ‘Antinous Herôs,’ depicts the god Lunus carrying a crescent moon upon his shoulder. The Bithynian coins generally give youthful portraits of Antinous upon the obverse, with the title of ‘Herôs’ or ‘Theos ;’ while the reverse is stamped with a pastoral figure, sometimes bearing the talaria, sometimes accompanied by a feeding ox or a boar or a star. This youth is supposed to be Philesius, the son of Hermes. In one specimen of the Bithynian series the reverse yields a head of Proserpine crowned with thorns. A coin of Chalcedon ornaments the reverse with a griffin seated near a naked figure. Another, from Corinth, bears the sun-god in a chariot ; another, from Cuma, presents an armed Pallas. Bulls, with the crescent moon, occur in the Hadrianotheritan medals : a crescent moon in that of Hierapolis : a ram and star, a female head crowned with towers, a standing bull, and Harpocrates placing one finger on his lips, in those of Nicomedia ; a horned moon and star in that of Epirot Nicopolis. One Philadelphian coin is distinguished by Antinous in a temple with four columns ; another by an Aphrodite in her cella. The Sardian coins give Zeus with the thunderbolt, or Phœbus with the lyre ; those of Smyrna are stamped with a standing ox, a ram, and the caduceus, a female panther and the thyrsus, or a hero reclining beneath a plane-tree ; those of Tarsus with the Dionysian cista, the Phœbean tripod, the river Cydnus, and the epigraphs ‘Neos Puthios,’ ‘Neos Iacchos ;’ those of the Tianians with Antinous as Bacchus on a panther, or, in one case, as Poseidôn.

It would be unsafe to suppose that the emblems of the reverse in each case had a necessary relation to Antinous, whose portrait is almost invariably represented on the obverse. They may refer, as in the case of the Tarsian river-god, to the locality in which the medal was struck. Yet the frequent occurrence of the well-known type with the attributes and

sacred animals of various deities, and the epigraphs ‘Neos Puthios’ or ‘Neos Iacchos,’ justify us in assuming that he was associated with divinities in vogue among the people who accepted his cult—especially Apollo, Dionysus, and Hermes. On more than one coin he is described as Antinous-Pan, showing that his Arcadian compatriots of Peloponnese and Bithynia paid him the compliment of placing him beside their great local deity. In a Latin inscription discovered at Tibur, he is connected with the sun-god of Noricia, Pannonia and Illyria, who was worshipped under the title of Belenus :

*Antinoo et Beleno par ætas famaque par est ;
Cur non Antinous sit quoque qui Belenus ?*

This couplet sufficiently explains the ground of his adscription to the society of gods distinguished for their beauty. Both Belenus and Antinous are young and beautiful : why, therefore, should not Antinous be honoured equally with Belenus ? The same reasoning would apply to all his impersonations. The pious imagination or the æsthetic taste tricked out this favourite of fortune in masquerade costumes, just as a wealthy lover may amuse himself by dressing his mistress after the similitude of famous beauties. The analogy of statues confirms this assumption. A considerable majority represent him as Dionysus Kisseus : in some of the best he is conceived as Hermes of the Palaestra or a simple hero : in one he is probably Dionysus Antheus ; in another Vertumnus or Aristæus ; yet again he is the Agathos Daimon : while a fine specimen preserved in England shows him as Ganymede raising a goblet of wine : a little statue in the Louvre gives him the attributes of youthful Herakles ; a bas-relief of somewhat doubtful genuineness in the Villa Albani exhibits him with Romanised features in the character perhaps of Castor. Again, I am not sure whether the Endymion in the celebrated bas-relief of the Capitol does not yield a portrait of Antinous.

This rapid enumeration will suffice to show that Antincus was universally conceived as a young deity in bloom, and that preference was given to Phœbus and Iacchus, the gods of divination and enthusiasm, for his associates. In some cases he appears to have been represented as a simple hero without the attributes of any deity. Many of his busts, and the fine nude statues of the Capitol and the Neapolitan Museum, belong to this class, unless we recognise the two last as Antinous under the form of a young Hercules, or of the gymnastic Hermes. But when he comes before us with the title of Puthios, or with the attributes of Dionysus, distinct reference is probably intended in the one case to his oracular quality, in the other to the enthusiasm which led to his death. Allusions to Harpocrates, Lunus, Aristæus, Philesius, Vertumnus, Castor, Herakles, Ganymedes, show how the divinising fancy played around the beauty of his youth, and sought to connect him with myths already honoured in the pious conscience. Lastly, though it would be hazardous to strain this point, we find in his chief impersonations a Chthonian character, a touch of the mystery that is shrouded in the world beyond the grave. The double nature of his Athenian cult may perhaps confirm this view. But, over and above all these symbolic illustrations, one artistic motive of immortal loveliness pervades and animates the series.

It becomes at this point of some moment to determine what was the relation of Antinous to the gods with whom he blended, and whose attributes he shared. It seems tolerably certain that he had no special legend which could be idealised in art. The mythopœic fancy invented no fable for him. His cult was parasitic upon elder cults. He was the colleague of greater well established deities, from whom he borrowed a pale and evanescent lustre. Speaking accurately, he was a hero or divinised mortal, on the same grade as Helen immortalised for her beauty, as Achilles for his prowess, or as Herakles for his

great deeds. But having no poet like Homer to sing his achievements, no myth fertile in emblems, he dwelt beneath the shadow of superior powers, and crept into a place with them. What was this place worth? What was the meaning attached by his votaries to the title *σύνθηρος* or *πάρεδρος θεός*? According to the simple meaning of both epithets, he occupied a seat together with or by the side of the genuine Olympians. In this sense Pindar called Dionysus the *πάρεδρος* of Demeter, because the younger god had been admitted to her worship on equal terms at Eleusis. In this sense Sophocles spoke of Himeros as *πάρεδρος* of the eternal laws, and of Justice as *σύντοκος* with the Chthonian deities. In this sense Euripides makes Helen *ξύρθακος* with her brethren, the Dioscuri. In this sense the three chief Archons at Athens were said to have two *πάρεδροι* apiece. In this sense, again, Hephaestion was named a *θεὸς πάρεδρος*, and Alexander in his lifetime was voted a thirteenth in the company of the twelve Olympians. The divinised emperors were *πάρεδροι* or *σύνθηροι*; nor did Virgil hesitate to flatter Augustus by questioning into which college of the immortals he would be adscript after death—

Tuque adeo, quem mox quæ sint habitura deorum
Concilia, incertum est.

Conscript deities of this heroic order were supposed to avert evils from their votaries, to pursue offenders with calamity, to inspire prophetic dreams, and to appear, as the phantom of Achilles appeared to Apollonius of Tyana, and answer questions put to them. They corresponded very closely and exactly to the saints of mediævalism, acting as patrons of cities, confraternities, and persons, and interposing between the supreme powers of heaven and their especial devotees. As a *πάρεδρος* of this exalted quality, Antinous was the associate of Phœbus, Bacchus, and Hermes among the Olympians, and a colleague

with the gods of Nile. The principal difficulty of grasping his true rank consists in the variety of his emblems and divine disguises.

It must here be mentioned that the epithet *πάρεδρος* had a secondary and inferior signification. It was applied by later authors to the demons or familiar spirits who attended upon enchanters like Simon Magus or Apollonius ; and such satellites were believed to be supplied by the souls of innocent young persons violently slain. Whether this secondary meaning of the title indicates a degeneration of the other, and forms the first step of the process whereby classic heroes were degraded into the foul fiends of mediæval fancy, or whether we find in it a wholly new application of the word, is questionable. I am inclined to believe that, while *πάρεδρος θεὸς* in the one case means an associate of the Olympian gods, *πάρεδρος δαίμων* in the other means a fellow-agent and assessor of the wizard. In other words, however they may afterwards have been confounded, the two uses of the same epithet were originally distinct : so that not every *πάρεδρος θεὸς*, Achilles, or Hephaestion or Antinous, was supposed to haunt and serve a sorcerer, but only some inferior spirit over whom his black art gave him authority. The *πάρεδρος θεὸς* was so called because he sat with the great gods. The *πάρεδρος δαίμων* was so called because he sat beside the magician. At the same time there seems sufficient evidence that the two meanings came to be confounded ; and as the divinities of Hellas, with all their lustrous train, paled before the growing splendour of Christ, they gradually fell beneath the necromantic ferule of the witch.

Returning from this excursion, and determining that Antinous was a hero or divinised mortal, adscript to the college of the greater gods, and invested with many of their attributes, we may next ask the question, why this artificial cult, due in the first place to imperial passion and caprice, and nourished by the adulation of fawning provinces, was preserved from the

rapid dissolution to which the flimsy products of court-flattery are subject. The mythopoetic faculty was extinct, or in its last phase of decadent vitality. There was nothing in the life of Antinous to create a legend or to stimulate the sense of awe ; and yet this worship persisted long after the fear of Hadrian had passed away, long after the benefits to be derived by humouring a royal fancy had been exhausted, long after anything could be gained by playing out the farce. It is clear, from a passage in Clemens Alexandrinus, that the sacred nights of Antinous were observed, at least a century after the date of his deification, with an enthusiasm that roused the anger of the Christian Father. Again, it is worthy of notice that, while many of the noblest works of antiquity have perished, the statues of Antinous have descended to us in fair preservation and in very large numbers. From the contemptuous destruction which erased the monuments of base men in the Roman Empire they were safe ; and the state in which we have them shows how little they had suffered from neglect. The most rational conclusion seems to be that Antinous became in truth a popular saint, and satisfied some new need in Paganism, for which none of the elder and more respectable deities sufficed. The novelty of his cult had, no doubt, something to do with the fascination it exercised ; and something may be attributed to the impulse art received from the introduction of so rare and original a type of beauty into the exhausted cycle of mythical subjects. The blending of Greek and Egyptian elements was also attractive to an age remarkable for its eclecticism. But after allowing for the many adventitious circumstances which concurred to make Antinous the fashion, it is hardly unreasonable to assume that the spirit of poetry in the youth's story, the rumour of his self-devoted death, kept him alive in the memory of the people. It is just that element of romance in the tale of his last hours, that preservative association with the pathos of self sacrifice, which forms the interest we still feel for him.

The deified Antinous was therefore for the Roman world a charming but dimly felt and undeveloped personality, made perfect by withdrawal into an unseen world of mystery. The belief in the value of vicarious suffering attached itself to his beautiful and melancholy form. His sorrow borrowed something of the universal world-pain, more pathetic than the hero-pangs of Herakles, the anguish of Prometheus, or the passion of Iacchus-Zagreus, because more personal and less suggestive of a cosmic mystery. The ancient cries of Ah Linus, Ah Adonis, found in him an echo. For votaries ready to accept a new god as simply as we accept a new poet, he was the final manifestation of an old-world mystery, the rejuvenescence of a well-known incarnation, the semi-Oriental realisation of a recurring Avatar. And if we may venture on so bold a surmise, this last flower of antique mythology had taken up into itself a portion of the blood outpoured on Calvary. Planted in the conservatory of semi-philosophical yearnings, faintly tinctured with the colours of misapprehended Christianity, without inherent stamina, without the powerful nutrition which the earlier heroic fables had derived from the spiritual vigour of a truly mythopœic age, the cult of Antinous subsisted as an echo, a reflection, the last serious effort of deifying but no longer potent Paganism, the last reverberation of its oracles, an æsthetic rather than a religious product, viewed even in its origin with sarcasm by the educated, and yet sufficiently attractive to enthrall the minds of simple votaries, and to survive the circumstances of its first creation. It may be remembered that the century which witnessed the canonisation of Antinous, produced the myth of Cupid and Psyche—or, if this be too sweeping an assertion, gave it final form, and handed it, in its suggestive beauty, to the modern world. Thus at one and the same moment the dying spirit of Hellas seized upon those doctrines of self-devotion and immortality which, through the triumph of Christian teaching, were gaining novel and incalculable value for the

world. According to its own laws of inspiration, it stamped both legends of Love victorious over Death, with beautiful form in myth and poem and statuary.

That we are not altogether unjustified in drawing this conclusion may be gathered from the attitude assumed by the Christian apologists toward Antinous. There is more than the mere hatred of a Pagan hero, more than the bare indignation at a public scandal, in their acrimony. Accepting the calumnious insinuations of Dion Cassius, these gladiators of the new faith found a terrible rhetorical weapon ready to their hands in the canonisation of a court favourite. Prudentius, Clemens Alexanderinus, Tertullian, Eusebius, Justin Martyr, Athanasius, Tatian—all inveigh, in nearly the same terms, against the Emperor's Ganymede, exalted to the skies, and worshipped with base fear and adulation by abject slaves. But in Origen, arguing with Celsus, we find a somewhat different keynote struck. Celsus, it appears, had told the story of Antinous, and had compared his cult with that of Christ. Origen replies justly, that there was nothing in common between the lives of Antinous and of Christ, and that his supposed divinity is a fiction. We can discern in this response an echo of the faith which endeared Antinous to his Pagan votaries. Antinous was hated by the Christians as a rival ; insignificant, it is true, and unworthy, but still of sufficient force to be regarded and persecuted. If Antinous had been utterly contemptible, if he had not gained some firm hold upon the piety of Graeco-Roman Paganism, Celsus could hardly have ventured to rest an argument upon his worship, nor would Origen have chosen to traverse that argument with solid reasoning, instead of passing it by in rhetorical silence. Nothing is more difficult than to understand the conditions of that age or to sympathise with its dominant passions. Educated as we have been in the traditions of the finally triumphant Christian faith, warmed through and through as we are by its summer glow and autumn splendour, believing as we do in the

adequacy of its spirit to satisfy the cravings of the human heart, how can we comprehend a moment in its growth when the divinised Antinous was not merely an object offensive to the moral sense, but also a parody dangerous to the pure form of Christ?

It remains to say somewhat of Antinous as he appears in art. His place in classic sculpture corresponds to his position in antique mythology. The Antinous statues and coins are reflections of earlier artistic masterpieces, executed with admirable skill, but lacking original faculty for idealisation in the artists. Yet there is so much personal attraction in his type, his statues are so manifestly faithful portraits, and we find so great a charm of novelty in his delicately perfect individuality, that the life-romance which they reveal, as through a veil of mystery, has force enough to make them rank among the valuable heirlooms of antiquity. We could almost believe that, while so many gods and heroes of Greece have perished, Antinous has been preserved in all his forms and phases for his own most lovely sake ; as though, according to Ghiberti's exquisite suggestion, gentle souls in the first centuries of Christianity had spared this blameless youth, and hidden him away with tender hands, in quiet places, from the fury of iconoclasts. Nor is it impossible that the great vogue of his worship was due among the Pagan laity to this same fascination of pure beauty. Could a more graceful temple of the body have been fashioned, after the Platonic theory, for the habitation of a guileless, god inspired, enthusiastic soul? The personality of Antinous, combined with the suggestion of his self-devoted death, made him triumphant in art as in the affections of the pious.

It would be an interesting task to compose a *catalogue raisonné* of Antinous statues and bas-reliefs, and to discuss the question of their mythological references. This is, however, not the place for such an inquiry. And yet I cannot quit Antinous

without some retrospect upon the most important of his portraits. Among the simple busts, by far the finest, to my thinking, are the colossal head of the Louvre, and the ivy-crowned bronze at Naples. The latter is not only flawless in its execution, but is animated with a pensive beauty of expression. The former, though praised by Winckelmann, as among the two or three most precious masterpieces of antique art, must be criticised for a certain vacancy and lifelessness. Of the heroic statues, the two noblest are those of the Capitol and Naples. The identity of the Capitoline Antinous has only once, I think, been seriously questioned; and yet it may be reckoned more than doubtful. The head is almost certainly not his. How it came to be placed upon a body presenting so much resemblance to the type of Antinous I do not know. Careful comparison of the torso and the arms with an indubitable portrait, will even raise the question whether this fine statue is not a Hermes or a hero of an earlier age. Its attitude suggests Narcissus or Adonis; and under either of these forms Antinous may properly have been idealised. The Neapolitan marble, on the contrary, yields the actual Antinous in all the exuberant fulness of his beauty. Head, body, pose, alike bring him vividly before us, forming an undoubtedly authentic portrait. The same personality, idealised, it is true, but rather suffering than gaining by the process, is powerfully impressed upon the colossal Dionysus of the Vatican. What distinguishes this great work is the inbreathed spirit of divinity, more overpowering here than in any other of the extant *ἀνδριάττες καὶ ἀγάλματα*. The bas-relief of the Villa Albani, restored to suit the conception of a Vertumnus, has even more of florid beauty; but whether the restoration was wisely made, may be doubted. It is curious to compare this celebrated masterpiece of technical dexterity with another bas-relief in the Villa Albani, representing Antinous as Castor. He is standing, half clothed with the chlamys, by a horse. His hair is close-

cropped, after the Roman fashion, cut straight above the forehead, but crowned with a fillet of lotos-buds. The whole face has a somewhat stern and frowning Roman look of resolution, contrasting with the mild benignity of the Bacchus statues, and the almost sulky voluptuousness of the busts. In the Lateran Museum Antinous appears as a god of flowers, holding in his lap a multitude of blossoms, and wearing on his head a wreath. The conception of this statue provokes comparison with the Flora of the Neapolitan Museum. I should like to recognise in it a Dionysus Antheus, rather than one of the more prosy Roman gods of horticulture. Not unworthy to rank with these first-rate portraits of Antinous is a Ganymede, engraved by the Dilettante Society, which represents him standing alert, in one hand holding the wine-jug and in the other lifting a cup aloft. It will be seen from even this brief enumeration of a few among the statues of Antinous, how many and how various they are. One, however, remains still to be discussed, which, so far as concerns the story of Antinous, is by far the most interesting of all. As a work of art, to judge by photographs, it is inferior to others in execution and design. Yet could we but understand its meaning clearly, the mystery of Antinous would be solved : the key to the whole matter probably lies here ; but, alas ! we know not how to use it. I speak of the Ildefonso Group at Madrid.¹

On one pedestal there are three figures in white marble. To the extreme right of the spectator stands a little female statue of a goddess, in archaic style, crowned with the calathos, and holding a sphere, probably of pomegranate fruit, to her breast. To the left of this image are two young men, three times the height of the goddess, quite naked, standing one on each side of a low altar. Both are crowned with a wreath of leaves and berries—laurel or myrtle. The youth to the right, next the image, holds a torch in either hand : with

¹ See Frontispiece.

the right he turns the flaming point downwards, till it lies upon the altar ; with the left he lifts the other torch aloft, and rests it on his shoulder. He has a beautiful Græco-Roman face, touched with sadness or ineffable reflection. The second youth leans against his comrade, resting his left arm across the other's back, and this hand is lightly placed upon the shoulder, close to the lifted torch. His right arm is bent, and so placed that the hand just cuts the line of the pelvis a little above the hip. The weight of his body is thrown principally upon the right leg ; the left foot is drawn back, away from the altar. It is the attitude of the Apollo Sauroctonos. His beautiful face, bent downward, is intently gazing with a calm, collected, serious, and yet sad cast of earnest meditation. His eyes seem fixed on something beyond him and beneath him—as it were on an inscrutable abyss ; and in this direction also looks his companion. The face is unmistakably the face of Antinous ; yet the figure, and especially the legs, are not characteristic. They seem modelled after the conventional type of the Greek Ephebus. Parts of the two torches and the lower half of the right arm of Antinous are restorations.

Such is the Ildefonso marble ; and it may be said that its execution is hard and rough—the arms of both figures are carelessly designed ; the hands and fingers are especially angular, elongated, and ill-formed. But there is a noble feeling in the whole group, notwithstanding. F. Tieck, the sculptor and brother of the poet, was the first to suggest that we have here Antinous, the Genius of Hadrian, and Persephone.¹ He also thought that the self-immolation of Antinous was indicated by the loving, leaning attitude of the younger man, and by his melancholy look of resolution. The same view, in all substantial points, is taken by Friedrichs, author of a work on Græco-

¹ See the article on Antinous, by Victor Rydberg, in the *Svensk Tidskrift för Litteratur, Politik, och Ekonomi*. 1875. Stockholm. Also Karl Bötticher, *Königliches Museum, Erklärendes Verzeichniss*. Berlin, 1871.

Roman sculpture. But Friedrichs, while admitting the identity of the younger figure with Antinous, and recognising Persephone in the archaic image, is not prepared to accept the elder as the Genius of Hadrian ; and it must be confessed that this face does not bear any resemblance to the portraits of the Emperor. According to his interpretation, the Dæmon is kindling the fire upon the sacrificial altar with the depressed torch ; and the second or lifted torch must be supposed to have been needed for the performance of some obscure rite of immolation. What Friedrichs fails to elucidate is the trustful attitude of Antinous, who could scarcely have been conceived as thus affectionately reclining on the shoulder of a merely sacrificial dæmon ; nor is there anything upon the altar to kindle. It must, however, be conceded that the imperfection of the marble at this point leaves the restoration of the altar and the torch upon it doubtful.

Charles Bötticher started a new solution of the principal problem. According to him, it was executed in the life-time of Antinous ; and it represents not a sacrifice of death, but a sacrifice of fidelity on the part of the two friends, Hadrian and Antinous, who have met together before Persephone to ratify a vow of love till death. He suggests that the wreaths are of stephanotis, that large-leaved myrtle, which was sacred to the Chthonian goddesses after the liberation of Semele from Hades by her son Dionysus. With reference to such ceremonies between Greek comrades, Bötticher cites a vase upon which Theseus and Peirithous are sacrificing in the temple of Persephone ; and he assumes that there may have existed Athenian groups in marble representing similar vows of friendship, from which Hadrian had this marble copied. He believes that the Genius of Hadrian is kindling one torch at the sacred fire, which he will reach to Antinous, while he holds the other in readiness to kindle for himself. This explanation is both ingenious and beautiful. It has also

the great merit of explaining the action of the right arm of Antinous. Yet it is hardly satisfactory. It throws no light upon the melancholy and solemnity of both figures, which irresistibly suggest a funereal rather than a joyous rite. Antinous is not even looking at the altar, and the meditative curves of his beautiful reclining form indicate anything rather than the spirited alacrity with which a friend would respond to his comrade's call at such a moment. Besides, why should not the likeness of Hadrian have been preserved as well as that of Antinous, if the group commemorated an act of their joint will? On the other hand, we must admit that the altar itself is not dressed for a funereal sacrifice.

It has been pointed out that in the British Museum there exists a bas-relief of Homer's apotheosis where we notice a figure holding two torches. Is it, then, possible that the Ildefonso marble may express, not the sacrifice, but the apotheosis of Antinous, and that the Genius who holds the two torches is conferring on him immortality? The lifted torch would symbolise his new life, and the depressed torch would stand for the life he had devoted. According to this explanation, the sorrowful expression of Antinous must indicate the agony of death through which he passed into the company of the undying. Against this interpretation is the fact that we have no precise authority for the symbolism of the torches, except only the common inversion of the life-brand by the Genius of Death.

Yet another solution may be suggested. Assuming that we have before us a sacrificial ceremony, and that the group was executed after the self-devotion of Antinous had passed into the popular belief, we may regard the elder youth as either the Genius of the Emperor, separate in spirit from Hadrian himself and presiding over his destinies, who accepts the offer of Antinous with solemn calmness suited to so great a gift; or else as the Genius of the Roman people, witnessing the same

act in the same majestic spirit. This view finds some support in the abstract ideality of the torch-bearer, who is clearly no historical personage as Antinous himself is, but rather a power controlling his fate. The interpretation of the two torches remains very difficult. In the torch flung down upon the flameless and barren altar we might recognise a symbol of Hadrian's life upon the point of extinction, but not yet extinguished ; and in the torch lifted aloft we might find a metaphor of life resuscitated and exalted. Nor is it perhaps without significance that the arm of the self-immolating youth meets the upraised torch, as though to touch the life which he will purchase with his death. There is, however, the objection stated above to this bold use of symbolism.

In support of any explanation which ascribes this group to a period later than the canonisation of Antinous, it may be repeated that the execution is inferior to that of almost all the other statues of the hero. Is it possible, then, that it belongs to a subsequent date, when art was further on the wane, but when the self-devotion of Antinous had become a dogma of his cult ?

After all is said, the Ildefonso marble, like the legend of Antinous, remains a mystery. Only hypotheses, more or less ingenious, more or less suited to our sympathies, varying between Casaubon's coarse vilification and Rydberg's roseate vision, are left us.

As a last note on the subject of Antinous let me refer to Raphael's statue of Jonah in the Chigi Chapel of S. Maria del Popolo at Rome. Raphael, who handled the myth of Cupid and Psyche so magnificently in the Villa Farnesina of his patron Agostino Chigi, dedicated a statue of Antinous—the only statue he ever executed in marble—under the title of a Hebrew prophet in a Christian sanctuary. The fact is no less significant than strange. During the early centuries of Christianity, as is amply proved by the sarcophagi in the

Lateran Museum, Jonah symbolised self-sacrifice and immortality. He was a type of Christ, an emblem of the Christian's hope beyond the grave. During those same centuries Antinous represented the same ideas, however inadequately, however dimly, for the unlettered laity of Paganism. It could scarcely have been by accident, or by mere admiration for the features of Antinous, that Raphael, in his marble, blent the Christian and the Pagan traditions. To unify and to transcend the double views of Christianity and Paganism in a work of pure art was Raphael's instinctive, if not his conscious, aim. Nor is there a more striking instance of this purpose than the youthful Jonah with the head of Hadrian's favourite. Leonardo's Dionysus-John-the-Baptist seems but a careless *jeu d'esprit* compared with this profound and studied symbol of renascent humanism. Thus to regard the Jonah-Antinous of the Cappella Chigi as a type of immortality and self-devotion, fusing Christian and Graeco-Roman symbolism in one work of modern art, is the most natural interpretation; but it would not be impossible to trace in it a metaphor of the resurgent Pagan spirit also—as though, leaving Jonah and his Biblical associations in the background, the artist had determined that from the mouth of the monstrous grave should issue not a bearded prophet, but the victorious youth who had captivated with his beauty and his heroism the sunset age of the classic world. At any rate, whatever may have been Raphael's intention, the legend of Antinous, that last creation of antique mythology, shines upon us in this marble, just as the tale of Hero and Leander, that last blossom of antique literature, flowers afresh in the verses of our Marlowe. It would appear as though the Renaissance poets, hastening to meet the classic world with arms of welcome, had embraced its latest saints, as nearest to them, in the rapture of their first enthusiasm.

Over all these questions, over all that concerns Antinous, there rests a cloud of darkness and impenetrable doubt. To

pierce that cloud is now impossible. The utmost we can do is to indulge our fancy in dreams of greater or less probability, and to mark out clearly the limitations of the subject. It is indeed something to have shown that the stigma of slavery and disgrace attaching to his name has no solid historical justification, and something to have suggested plausible reasons for conjecturing that his worship had a genuine spiritual basis. Yet the sincere critic, at the end of the whole inquiry, will confess that he has only cast a plummet into the unfathomable sea of ignorance. What remains, immortal, indestructible, victorious, is Antinous in art. Against the gloomy background of doubt, calumny, contention, terrible surmise, his statues are illuminated with the dying glory of the classic genius—even as the towers and domes of a marble city shine forth from the purple banks of a thunder-cloud in sunset light. Here and here only does reality emerge from the chaos of conflicting phantoms. Front to front with them, it is allowed us to forget all else but the beauty of one who died young because the gods loved him. But when we question those wonderful mute features and beg them for their secret, they return no answer. There is not even a smile upon the parted lips. So profound is the mystery, so insoluble the enigma, that from its most importunate interrogation we derive nothing but an attitude of deeper reverence. This in itself, however, is worth the pains of study.¹

¹ I must here express my indebtedness to my friend H. F. Brown for a large portion of the materials used by me in this essay on Antinous, which I had no means at Davos Platz of accumulating for myself, and which he unearthed from the libraries of Florence in the course of his own work, and generously placed at my disposal.

LUCRETIUS.

IN seeking to distinguish the Roman from the Greek genius we can find no surer guide than Virgil's famous lines in the Sixth *Aeneid*. Virgil lived to combine the traditions of both races in a work of profoundly meditated art, and to their points of divergence he was sensitive as none but a poet bent upon resolving them could be. The real greatness of the Romans consisted in their capacity for government, law, practical administration. What they willed, they carried into effect with an iron indifference to everything but the object in view. What they acquired, they held with the firm grasp of force, and by the might of organised authority. Their architecture, in so far as it was original, subserved purposes of public utility. Philosophy with them ceased to be speculative, and applied itself to the ethics of conduct. Their religious conceptions—in so far as these were not adopted together with general culture from the Greeks, or together with sensual mysticism from the East—were practical abstractions. The Latin ideal was to give form to the state by legislation, and to mould the citizen by moral discipline. The Greek ideal was contained in the poetry of Homer, the sculpture of Pheidias, the heroism of Harmodius, the philosophy of Socrates. Hellas was held together by no system, but by the Delphic oracle and the Olympian games. The Greeks depended upon culture, as the Romans upon law. The national character determined by culture, and that determined by discipline, eventually broke down: but the

ruin in either case was different. The Greek became servile, indolent, and slippery ; the Roman became arrogant, blood-thirsty, tyrannous, and brutal. The Greeks in their best days attained to *σωφροσύνη*, their regulative virtue, by a kind of instinct ; and even in their worst debasement they never exhibited the extravagance of lust and cruelty and pompous prodigality displayed by Rome. The Romans, deficient in the æsthetic instinct, whether applied to morals or to art, were temperate upon compulsion ; and when the strain of law relaxed, they gave themselves unchecked to profligacy. The bad taste of the Romans made them aspire to the huge and monstrous. Nero's whim to cut through the isthmus, Caligula's villa built upon the sea at Baiae, the acres covered by imperial palaces in Rome, are as Latin as the small scale of the Parthenon is Greek. Athens annihilates our notions of mere magnitude by the predominance of harmony and beauty, to which size is irrelevant. Rome dilates them to the full : it is the colossal greatness, the mechanical pride, of her monuments that win our admiration. By comparing the Dionysian theatre at Athens, during a representation of the *Antigone*, with the Flavian amphitheatre at Rome, while the gladiators sang their *Ave Cæsar!* we gain at once a measure for the differences between Greek and Latin taste. In spiritual matters, again, Rome, as distinguished from Hellas, was omnivorous. The cosmopolitan receptivity of Roman sympathies, absorbing Egypt and the Orient wholesale, is as characteristic as the exclusiveness of the Greeks, their sensitive anxiety about the *ἱθուς*. We feel that it was in a Roman rather than a Greek atmosphere, where no middle term of art existed like a neutral ground between the moral law and sin, where no delicate intellectual sensibilities interfered with the assimilation of new creeds, that Christianity was destined to strike root and flourish.

These remarks, familiar to students, form a proper prelude to the criticism of Lucretius : for in Lucretius the Roman

character found its most perfect literary incarnation. He is at all points a true Roman, gifted with the strength, the conquering temper, the uncompromising haughtiness, and the large scale of his race. Holding, as it were, the thought of Greece in fee, he administers the Epicurean philosophy as though it were a province, marshalling his arguments like legionaries, and spanning the chasms of speculative insecurity with the masonry of hypotheses. As the arches of the Pont du Gard, suspended in their power amid that solitude, produce an overwhelming feeling of awe ; so the huge fabric of the Lucretian system, hung across the void of Nihilism, inspires a sense of terror, not so much on its own account as for the Roman sternness of the mind that made it. ‘*Le retentissement de mes pas dans ces immenses voûtes me faisait croire entendre la forte voix de ceux qui les avait bâties. Je me perdais comme un insecte dans cette immensité.*’ This is what Rousseau wrote about the aqueduct of Nismes. This is what we feel in pacing the corridors of the Lucretian poem. Sometimes it seems like walking through resounding caves of night and death, where unseen cataracts keep plunging down uncertain depths, and winds ‘thwarted and forlorn’ swell from an unknown distance, and rush by, and wail themselves to silence in the unexplored beyond. At another time the impression left upon the memory is different. We have been following a Roman road from the gate of the Eternal City, through field and vineyard, by lake and river-bed, across the broad intolerable plain and the barren tops of Alps, down into forests where wild beasts and barbarian tribes wander, along the marge of Rhine or Elbe, and over frozen fens, in one perpetual straight line, until the sea is reached and the road ends because it can go no further. All the while, the iron wheel-rims of our chariot have jarred upon imperishable paved work ; there has been no stop nor stay ; the visions of things beautiful and strange and tedious have flown past ; at the climax we look forth across a waste of waves

and tumbling wilderness of surf and foam, where the storm sweeps and hurrying mists drive eastward close above our heads. The want of any respite, breathing-space, or intermission in the poem, helps to force this image of a Roman journey on our mind. From the first line to the last there is no turning-point, no pause of thought, scarcely a comma, and the whole breaks off :

rixantes potius quam corpora desererentur :

as though a scythe-sweep from the arm of Death had cut the thread of singing short.

Is, then, this poem truly song? Indeed it is. The brazen voice of Rome becomes tunable; a majestic rhythm sustains the progress of the singer, who, like Milton's Satan,—

O'er bog or steep, through strait, rough, dense, or rare,
With head, hands, wings or feet, pursues his way,
And swims, or sinks, or wades, or creeps, or flies.

It is only because, being so much a Roman, he insists on moving ever onward with unwavering march, that Lucretius is often wearisome and rough. He is too disdainful to care to mould the whole stuff of his poem to one quality. He is too truth-loving to condescend to rhetoric. The scoriæ, the grit, the dross, the quartz, the gold, the jewels of his thought are hurried onward in one mighty lava-flood, that has the force to bear them all with equal ease—not altogether unlike that hurling torrent of the world painted by Tintoretto in his picture of the Last Day, which carries on its breast cities and forests and men with all their works, to plunge them in a bottomless abyss.

Poems of the perfect Hellenic type may be compared to bronze statues, in the material of which many divers metals have been fused. Silver and tin and copper and lead and gold are there: each substance adds a quality to the mass; yet the whole is bronze. The furnace of the poet's will has so melted and mingled all these ores, that they have run together and

filled the mould of his imagination. It is thus that Virgil chose to work. He made it his glory to realise artistic harmony, and to preserve a Greek balance in his style. Not so Lucretius. In him the Roman spirit, disdainful, uncompromising, and forceful, had full sway. We can fancy him accosting the Greek masters of the lyre upon Parnassus, deferring to none, conceding nought, and meeting their arguments with proud indifference :

tu regere imperio populos Romane memento.

The Roman poet, swaying the people of his thoughts, will stoop to no persuasion, adopt no middle course. It is not his business to please, but to command ; he will not wait upon the *καιρός*, or court opportunity ; Greeks may surprise the Muses in relenting moods, and seek out ‘mollia tempora fandi’ ; all times and seasons must serve him ; the terrible, the discordant, the sublime, and the magnificent shall drag his thundering car-wheels, as he lists, along the road of thought.

At the very outset of the poem we feel ourselves within the grasp of the Roman imagination. It is no Aphrodite, risen from the waves and white as the sea-foam, that he invokes :—

Aeneadum genetrix, hominum divomque voluptas,
alma Venus.

This Venus is the mother of the brood of Rome, and at the same time an abstraction as wide as the universe. See her in the arms of Mavors :—

qui saepe tuum se
reicit aeterno devictus volnere amoris,
atque ita suspiciens tereti cervice reposta
pascit amore avidos inhians in te, dea, visus,
eque tuo pendet resupini spiritus ore.
hunc tu, diva, tuo recubantem corpore sancto
circumfusa super, suavis ex ore loquelas
funde petens placidam Romanis, incluta, pacem.

In the whole Lucretian treatment of love there is nothing really

Greek. We do not hear of Erôs, either as the mystic mania of Plato, or as the winged boy of Meleager. Love in Lucretius is something deeper, larger, and more elemental than the Greeks conceived ; a fierce and overmastering force, a natural impulse which men share in common with the world of things.¹ Both the pleasures and the pains of love are conceived on a gigantic scale, and described with an irony that has the growl of a roused lion mingled with its laughter :

ulcus enim vivescit et inveterascit alendo
inque dies gliscit furor atque aerumna gravescit.

The acts of love and the insanities of passion are viewed from no standpoint of sentiment or soft emotion, but always in relation to philosophical ideas, or as the manifestation of something terrible in human life. Yet they lose nothing thereby in the voluptuous impression left upon the fancy :—

sic in amore Venus simulacris ludit amantis,
nec satiare queunt spectando corpore coram
nec manibus quicquam teneris abradere membris
possunt errantes incerti corpore toto.
denique cum membris conlatis flore fruuntur
aetatis, iam cum praesagit gaudia corpus
atque in eost Venus ut muliebria conserat arva,
adfigunt avide corpus iunguntque salivas
oris et inspirant pressantes dentibus ora,
nequiquam, quoniam nil inde abradere possunt
nec penetrare et abire in corpus corpore toto.

The master-word in this passage is *nequiquam*. ‘To desire the impossible,’ says the Greek proverb, ‘is a disease of the soul.’ Lucretius, who treats of physical desire as a torment, asserts the impossibility of its perfect satisfaction. There is

¹ A fragment preserved from the *Danaides* of Æschylus has the thought of Aphrodite as the mistress of love in earth and sky and sea and cloud ; and this idea finds a philosophical expression in Empedocles. But the tone of these Greek poets is as different from that of Lucretius as a Greek Hera is from a Roman Juno.

something almost tragic in these sighs and pantings and pleasure-throes, and incomplete fruitions of souls pent up within their frames of flesh. We seem to see a race of men and women such as have never lived, except perhaps in Rome or in the thought of Michael Angelo,¹ meeting in leonine embraces that yield pain, whereof the climax is, at best, relief from rage and respite for a moment from consuming fire. There is a life dæmonic rather than human in those mighty limbs ; and the passion that bends them on the marriage bed has in it the stress of storms, the rampings and the roarings of leopards at play. Or, take again this single line :

et Venus in silvis iungebat corpora amantum.

What a picture of primeval breadth and vastness ! The *vice égrillard* of Voltaire, the coarse animalism of Rabelais, even the large comic sexuality of Aristophanes, are in another region : for the forest is the world, and the bodies of the lovers are things natural and unashamed, and Venus is the tyrannous instinct that controls the blood in spring. Only a Roman poet could have conceived of passion so mightily and so impersonally, expanding its sensuality to suit the scale of Titanic existences, and purging from it both sentiment and spirituality as well as all that makes it mean.

In like manner, the Lucretian conception of Ennui is wholly Roman :—

Si possent homines, proinde ac sentire videntur
pondus inesse animo quod se gravitate fatiget,
e quibus id fiat causis quoque noscere et unde
tanta mali tamquam moles in pectore constet,
haut ita vitam agerent, ut nunc plerumque videmus
quid sibi quisque velit nescire et quaerere semper
commutare locum quasi onus deponere possit.
exit saepe foras magnis ex aedibus ille,

¹ See, for instance, his meeting of Ixion with the phantom of Juno, or his design for Leda and the Swan.

esse domi quem pertaesumst, subitoque revertit,
 quippe foris nilo melius qui sentiat esse.
 currit agens mannos ad villam praecipitanter,
 auxilium tectis quasi ferre ardentibus instans;
 oscitat extemplo, tetigit cum limina villaer,
 aut abit in somnum gravis atque obliaqua querit,
 aut etiam properans urbem petit atque revisit.
 hoc se quisque modo fugit (at quem scilicet, ut fit,
 effugere haut potis est, ingratis haeret) et odit
 propterea, morbi quia causam non tenet aeger;
 quam bene si videat, iam rebus quisque relictis
 naturam primum studeat cognoscere rerum,
 temporis aeterni quoniam, non unius horae,
 ambigitur status, in quo sit mortalibus omnis
 aetas, post mortem quae restat cumque manenda.

Virgil would not have written these lines. A Greek poet could not have conceived them : unless we imagine to ourselves what Æschylus or Pindar, oppressed by long illness, and forgetful of the gods, might possibly have felt. In its sense of spiritual vacancy, when the world and all its uses have become flat, stale, unprofitable, and the sentient soul oscillates like a pendulum between weariful extremes, seeking repose in restless movement, and hurling the ruins of a life into the gulf of its exhausted cravings, we perceive already the symptoms of that unnamed malady which was the plague of imperial Rome. The tyrants and the suicides of the Empire expand before our eyes a pageant of their lassitude, relieved in vain by festivals of blood and orgies of unutterable lust. It is not that *ennui* was a specially Roman disease. Under certain conditions it is sure to afflict all overtaxed civilisation ; and for the modern world no one has expressed its nature better than the slight and feminine De Musset.¹ Indeed, the Latin language has no one phrase denoting Ennui ;—*livor* and *fastidium*, and even *tedium vitae*, meaning something more specific and less all-pervasive as a moral agency. This in itself is significant, since it shows the

¹ See the prelude to *Les Confessions d'un Enfant du Siècle* and *Les Nuits.*

unconsciousness of the race at large, and renders the intuition of Lucretius all the more remarkable. But in Rome there were the conditions favourable to its development—imperfect culture, vehement passions unabsorbed by commerce or by political life, the habituation to extravagant excitement in war and in the circus, and the fermentation of an age foredestined to give birth to new religious creeds. When the infinite but ill-assured power of the Empire was conferred on semi-madmen, Ennui in Rome assumed colossal proportions. Its victims sought for palliatives in cruelty and crime elsewhere unknown, except perhaps in Oriental courts. Lucretius, in the last days of the Republic, had discovered its deep significance for human nature. To all the pictures of Tacitus it forms a solemn tragic background, enhancing, as it were, by spiritual gloom the carnival of passions which gleam so brilliantly upon his canvas. In the person of Caligula, Ennui sat supreme upon the throne of the terraqueous globe. The insane desires and the fantastic deeds of the autocrat who wished one head for humanity that he might cut it off, sufficiently reveal the extent to which his spirit had been gangrened by this ulcer. There is a simple paragraph in Suetonius which lifts the veil from his imperial unrest more ruthlessly than any legend :—“ *Incitabatur insomniis maxime ; neque enim plus tribus horis nocturnis quiescebat, ac ne his quidem placidâ quiete, at pavidâ miris rerum imaginibus . . . ideoque magnâ parte noctis, vigiliæ cubandique tædio, nunc toro residens, nunc per longissimas porticus vagus, invocare identidem atque expectare lucem consueverat.* ” This is the very picture of Ennui that has become mortal disease. Nor was Nero different. ‘ *Néron*,’ says Victor Hugo, ‘ cherche tout simplement une distraction. Poëte, comédien, chanteur, cocher, épuisant la férocité pour trouver la volupté, essayant le changement de sexe, époux de l’eunuque Sporus et épouse de l’esclave Pythagore, et se promenant dans les rues de Rome entre sa femme et son mari ; ayant deux plaisirs : voir le peuple

se jeter sur les pièces d'or, les diamants et les perles, et voir les lions se jeter sur le peuple ; incendiaire par curiosité et parricide par désœuvrement.' Nor need we stop at Nero. Over Vitellius at his banquets, over Hadrian in his Tiburtine villa calling in vain on Death, over Commodus in the arena, and Heliogabalus among the rose-leaves, the same livid shadow of imperial Ennui hangs. We can even see it looming behind the noble form of Marcus Aurelius, who, amid the ruins of empire and the revolutions of belief, penned in his tent among the Quadi those maxims of endurance which were powerless to regenerate the world.

Roman again, in the true sense of the word, is the Lucretian philosophy of Conscience. Christianity has claimed the celebrated imprecation of Persius upon tyrants for her own, as though to her alone belonged the secret of the soul-tormenting sense of guilt. Yet it is certain that we owe to the Romans that conception of sin bearing its own fruit of torment which the Latin Fathers—Augustine and Tertullian—imposed with such terrific force upon the mediæval consciousness. There is no need to conclude that Persius was a Christian because he wrote—

Magne pater divum, sævos punire tyrannos, etc.,

when we know that he had before his eyes that passage in the third book of the 'De Rerum Naturâ' (978-1023) which reduces the myths of Tityos and Sisyphus and Cerberus and the Furies to facts of the human soul :—

sed metus in vita poenarum pro male factis
est insignibus insignis, scelerisque luella,
carcer et horribilis de saxo jactu' deorsum,
verbera carnifices robur pix lammina taedae ;
quae tamen etsi absunt, at mens sibi conscientia facti
praemetuens adhibet stimulus terretque flagellis
nec videt interea qui terminus esse malorum
possit nec quae sit poenarum denique finis
atque eadem metuit magis haec ne in morte gravescant.

The Greeks, by personifying those secret terrors, had removed

them into a region of existences separate from man. They became dread goddesses, who might to some extent be propitiated by exorcisms or expiatory rites. This was in strict accordance with the mythopoeic and artistic quality of the Greek intellect. The stern and somewhat prosaic rectitude of the Roman broke through such figments of the fancy, and exposed the sore places of the soul itself. The theory of the Conscience, moreover, is part of the Lucretian polemic against false notions of the gods and the pernicious belief in hell.

Positivism and Realism were qualities of Roman as distinguished from Greek culture. There was no self-delusion in Lucretius—no attempt, however unconscious, to compromise unpalatable truth, or to invest philosophy with the charm of myth. A hundred illustrations might be chosen to prove his method of setting forth thought with unadorned simplicity. These, however, are familiar to any one who has but opened the ‘*De Rerum Naturâ*.’ It is more profitable to trace this Roman ruggedness in the poet’s treatment of the subject which more than any other seems to have preoccupied his intellect and fascinated his imagination—that is Death. His poem has been called by a great critic the ‘poem of Death.’ Shakspeare’s line—

And Death once dead, there’s no more dying then,

might be written as a motto on the title-page of the book, which is full of passages like this :—

scire licet nobis nil esse in morte timendum
nec miserum fieri qui non est posse neque hilum
differre anne ullo fuerit iam tempore natus,
mortalem vitam mors cum immortalis ademit.’

His whole mind was steeped in the thought of death ; and though he can hardly be said to have written ‘the words that shall make death exhilarating,’ he devoted his genius, in all its energy, to removing from before men the terror of the doom

that waits for all. Sometimes, in his attempt at consolation, he adduces images which, like the Delphian knife, are double-handled, and cut both ways :—

hinc indignatur se mortalem esse creatum
nec videt in vera nullum fore morte alium se
qui possit vivus sibi se lugere peremptum
stansque iacentem se lacerari urive dolere.

This suggests, by way of contrast, Blake's picture of the soul that has just left the body and laments her separation. As we read, we are inclined to lay the book down, and wonder whether the argument is, after all, conclusive. May not the spirit, when she has quitted her old house, be forced to weep and wring her hands, and stretch vain shadowy arms to the limbs that were so dear? No one has felt more profoundly than Lucretius the pathos of the dead. The intensity with which he realised what we must lose in dying and what we leave behind of grief to those who loved us, reaches a climax of restrained passion in this well-known paragraph :—

‘iam iam non domus accipiet te laeta, neque uxor
optima nec dulces occurrent oscula nati
praeripere et tacita pectus dulcedine tangent.
non poteris factis florentibus esse, tuisque
praesidium. misero misere’ aiunt ‘omnia ademit
una dies infesta tibi tot praemia vitae.’
‘illud in his rebus non addunt ‘nec tibi earum
iam desiderium rerum super insidet una.’
quod bene si videant animo dictisque sequantur,
dissoluant animi magno se angore metuque.
‘tu quidem ut es leto sopitus, sic eris aevi
quod superest cunctis privatu’ doloribus aegris.
at nos horrifico cinefactum te prope busto
insatiabiliter deflevimus, aeternumque
nulla dies nobis maerorem e pectore demet.’

Images, again, of almost mediæval grotesqueness, rise in his mind when he contemplates the universality of Death. Simonides had dared to say : ‘One horrible Charybdis waits

for all.' That was as near a discord as a Greek could venture on. Lucretius describes the open gate and 'huge wide-gaping maw' which must devour heaven, earth, and sea, and all that they contain :—

haut igitur leti paeclusa est ianua caelo
nec soli terraeque neque altis aequoris undis,
sed patet immani et vasto respectat hiatu.

The ever-during battle of life and death haunts his imagination. Sometimes he sets it forth in philosophical array of argument. Sometimes he touches on the theme with elegiac pity :—

miseretur funere vagor
quem pueri tollunt visentis luminis oras ;
nec nox ulla diem neque noctem aurora secutast
quaes non audierit mixtos vagitibus aegris
ploratus mortis comites et funeris atri.

Then again he returns, with obstinate persistence, to describe how the dread of death, fortified by false religion, hangs like a pall over humanity, and how the whole world is a cemetery overshadowed by cypresses. The most sustained, perhaps, of these passages is at the beginning of the third book (lines 31 to 93). The most profoundly melancholy is the description of the new-born child (v. 221) :—

quare mors immatura vagatur ?
tum porro puer, ut saevis proiectus ab undis
navita nudus humi iacet, infans, indigus omni
vitali auxilio, cum primum in luminis oras
nixibus ex alvo matris natura profudit,
vagituque locum lugubri complet, ut aecumst
cui tantum in vita restet transire malorum.

Disease and old age, as akin to Death, touch his imagination with the same force. He rarely alludes to either without some lines as terrible as these (iii. 472, 453) :—

nam dolor ac morbus leti fabricator uterquest.
claudicat ingenium, delirat lingua, labat mens.

Another kindred subject affects him with an equal pathos. He sees the rising and decay of nations, age following after age, like waves hurrying to dissolve upon a barren shore, and writes (ii. 75) :—

sic rerum summa novatur
semper, et inter se mortales mutua vivunt,
augescunt aliae gentes, aliae minuantur,
inque brevi spatio mutantur saecula animantium
et quasi cursores vitai lampada tradunt.

Although the theme is really the procession of life through countless generations, it obtains a tone of sadness from the sense of intervening decay and change. No Greek had the heart thus to dilate his imagination with the very element of death. What the Greeks commemorated when they spoke of Death was the loss of the lyre and the hymeneal chaunt, and the passage across dim waves to a sunless land. Nor indeed does Lucretius, like the modern poet of Democracy, ascend into the regions of ecstatic trance :—

Lost in the loving, floating ocean of thee,
Laved in the flood of thy bliss, O Death.

He keeps his reason cool, and sternly contemplates the thought of the annihilation which awaits all perishable combinations of eternal things. Like Milton, Lucretius delights in giving the life of his imagination to abstractions. Time, with his retinue of ages, sweeps before his vision, and he broods in fancy over the illimitable ocean of the universe. The fascination of the infinite is the quality which, more than any other, separates Lucretius as a Roman poet from the Greeks.

Another distinctive feature of his poetry Lucretius inherited as part of his birthright. This is the sense of Roman greatness. It pervades the poem, and may be felt in every part ; although to Athens, and the Greek sages, Democritus, Empedocles, Anaxagoras, Heraclitus, and Epicurus, as the fountain-heads of soul-delivering culture, he reserves his most

magnificent periods of panegyric. Yet when he would fain persuade his readers that the fear of death is nugatory, and that the future will be to them even as the past, it is the shock of Rome with Carthage that he dwells upon as the critical event of the world's history (iii. 830) :—

Nil igitur mors est ad nos neque pertinet hilum,
quandoquidem natura animi mortalis habetur.
et velut anteacto nil tempore sensimus aegri,
ad configendum venientibus undique Poenis,
omnia cum belli trepido concussa tumultu
horrida contremuere sub altis aetheris oris,
in dubioque fuere utrorum ad regna cadendum
omnibus humanis esset terraque marique,
sic :

The lines in italics could have been written by none but a Roman conscious that the conflict with Carthage had decided the absolute empire of the habitable world. In like manner the description of a military review (ii. 323) is Roman : so, too, is that of the amphitheatre (iv. 75) :—

et volgo faciunt id lutea russaque vela
et ferrugina, cum magnis intenta theatris
per malos volgata trabesque trementia flutant.
namque ibi concessum caveai super et omnem
scaenai speciem, patrum coetumque decorum
inficiunt coguntque suo fluitare colore.

The imagination of Lucretius, however, was habitually less affected by the particular than by the universal. He loved to dwell upon the large and general aspects of things—on the procession of the seasons, for example, rather than upon the landscape of the Campagna in spring or autumn. Therefore it is only occasionally and by accident that we find in his verse touches peculiarly characteristic of the manners of his country. Therefore, again, it has happened that modern critics have detected a lack of patriotic interest in this most Roman of all Latin poets. Also may it here be remembered,

that the single line which sums up all the history of Rome in one soul-shaking hexameter, is not Lucretian but Virgilian.

Tantae molis erat Romanam condere gentem.

The custode of the Baths of Titus, when he lifts his torch to explore those ruined arches, throws the wan light upon one place where a Roman hand has scratched that verse in gigantic letters on the cement. The colossal genius of Rome seems speaking to us, an oracle no lapse of time can render dumb.

But Lucretius is not only the poet *par excellence* of Rome. He will always rank also among the first philosophical poets of the world : and here we find a second standpoint for inquiry. The question how far it is practicable to express philosophy in verse, and to combine the accuracy of scientific language with the charm of rhythm and the ornaments of the fancy, is one which belongs rather to modern than to ancient criticism. In the progress of culture there has been an ever-growing separation between the several spheres of intellectual activity. What Livy said about the Roman Empire is true now of knowledge ; *magnitudine laborat suâ* : so that the labour of specialising and distinguishing has for many centuries been all-important. Not only do we disbelieve in the desirability of smearing honey upon the lip of the medicine-glass through which the draught of erudition has to be administered ; but we know for certain that it is only at the meeting-points between science and emotion that the philosophic poet finds a proper sphere. Whatever subject-matter can be permeated or penetrated with strong human feeling is fit for verse. Then the rhythms and the forms of poetry to which high passions naturally move, become spontaneous. The emotion is paramount, and the knowledge conveyed is valuable as supplying fuel to the fire of feeling. There are, were, and always will be high imaginative points of vantage commanding the broad fields of knowledge, upon

which the poet may take his station to survey the world and all that it contains. But it has long ceased to be his function to set forth, in any kind of metre, systems of speculative thought or purely scientific truths. This was not the case in the old world. There was a period in the development of the intellect when the abstractions of logic appeared like intuitions, and guesses about the structure of the universe still wore the garb of fancy. When physics and metaphysics were scarcely distinguished from mythology, it was natural to address the Muses at the outset of a treatise of ontology, and to cadence a theory of elemental substances in hexameter verse. Thus the philosophical poems of Xenophanes, Parmenides, and Empedocles belonged essentially to a transitional stage of human culture.

There is a second species of poetry to which the name of philosophical may be given, though it better deserves that of mystical. Pantheism occupies a middle place between a scientific theory of the universe and a form of religious enthusiasm. It supplies an element in which the poetic faculty can move with freedom: for its conclusions, in so far as they pretend to philosophy, are large and general, and the emotions which it excites are co-extensive with the world. Therefore, Pantheistic mysticism, from the Bhagavadgita of the far East, through the Persian Soofis, down to the poets of our own century, Goethe, and Shelley, and Wordsworth, and Whitman, and many more whom it would be tedious to enumerate, has generated a whole tribe of philosophic singers.

Yet a third class may be mentioned. Here we have to deal with what are called didactic poems. These, like the metaphysical epic, began to flourish in early Greece at the moment when exact thought was dividing itself laboriously from myths and fancies. Hesiod with his poem on the life of man leads the way; and the writers of moral sentences in elegiac verse, among whom Solon and Theognis occupy the first place,

follow. Latin literature contributes highly artificial specimens of this kind in the 'Georgics' of Virgil, the stoical diatribes of Persius, and the 'Ars Poetica' of Horace. Didactic verse had a special charm for the genius of the Latin race. The name of such poems in the Italian literature of the Renaissance is legion. The French delighted in the same style under the same influences ; nor can we fail to attribute the 'Essay on Man' and the 'Essay on Criticism' of our own Pope to a similar revival in England of Latin forms of art. The taste for didactic verse has declined. Yet in its stead another sort of philosophical poetry has grown up in this century, which, for the want of a better term, may be called psychological. It deserves this title, inasmuch as the motive-interest of the art in question is less the passion or the action of humanity than the analysis of the same. The 'Faust' of Goethe, the 'Prelude' and 'Excursion' of Wordsworth, Browning's 'Sordello' and Mrs. Browning's 'Aurora Leigh,' together with the 'Musings' of Coleridge and the 'In Memoriam' of Tennyson, may be roughly reckoned in this class. It will be noticed that nothing has been said about professedly religious poetry, much of which attaches itself to mysticism, while some, like the 'Divine Comedy' of Dante, is philosophic in the truest sense of the word.

Where, then, are we to place Lucretius? He was a Roman, imbued with the didactic predilections of the Latin race ; and the didactic quality of the 'De Rerum Naturâ' is unmistakable. Yet it would be uncritical to place this poem in the class which derives from Hesiod. It belongs really to the succession of Xenophanes, Parmenides, and Empedocles. As such it was an anachronism. The specific moment in the development of thought at which the Parmenidean Epic was natural has been already described. The Romans of the age of Lucretius had advanced far beyond it. The idealistic metaphysics of the Socratic school, the positive ethics of the Stoics, and the profound materialism of Epicurus, had accustomed the mind to

habits of exact and subtle thinking, prolonged from generation to generation upon the same lines of speculative inquiry. Philosophy expressed in verse was out of date. Moreover, the very myths had been rationalised. Euhemerus had even been translated into Latin by Ennius, and his prosaic explanations of Greek legend had found acceptance with the essentially positive Roman intellect. Lucretius himself, it may be said in passing, thought it worth while to offer a philosophical explanation of the Greek mythology. The Cybele of the poets is shown in one of his sublimest passages (ii. 600–645) to be Earth. To call the sea Neptune, corn Ceres, and wine Bacchus, seems to him a simple folly (ii. 652–657). We have already seen how he reduces the fiends and spectres of the Greek Hades to facts of moral subjectivity (iii. 978–1023). In another place he attacks the worship of Phœbus and the stars (v. 110); in yet another he upsets the belief in the Centaurs, Scylla, and Chimæra (v. 877–924) with a gravity which is almost comic. Such arguments formed a necessary element in his polemic against foul religion (*foeda religio—turpis religio*); to deliver men from which (i. 62–112), by establishing firmly in their minds the conviction that the gods exist far away from this world in unconcerned tranquillity (ii. 646), and by substituting the notion of Nature for that of deity (ii. 1090), was the object of his scientific demonstration.

Lucretius, therefore, had outgrown mythology, was hostile to religion, and burned with unsurpassable enthusiasm to indoctrinate his Roman readers with the weighty conclusions of systematised materialism. Yet he chose the vehicle of hexameter verse, and trammelled his genius with limitations which Empedocles, four hundred years before, must have found almost intolerable. It needed the most ardent intellectual passion and the loftiest inspiration to sustain on his far flight a poet who had forged a hoplite's panoply for singing robes. Both passion and inspiration were granted to Lucretius in full

measure. And just as there was something contradictory between the scientific subject-matter and the poetical form of his masterpiece, so the very sources of his poetic strength were such as are usually supposed to depress the soul. His passion was for death, annihilation, godlessness. It was not the eloquence, but the force of logic, in Epicurus that roused his enthusiasm :—

ergo vivida vis animi pervicit et extra
processit longe flammantia moenia mundi.

No other poet who ever lived in any age, or any shore, drew inspiration from founts more passionless and more impersonal.

The ‘*De Rerum Naturâ*’ is therefore an attempt, unique in its kind, to combine philosophical exposition and poetry in an age when the requirements of the former had already outgrown the resources of the latter. Throughout the poem we trace a discord between the matter and the form. The frost of reason and the fire of fancy war in deadly conflict ; for the Lucretian system destroyed nearly everything with which the classical imagination loved to play. It was only in some high ethereal region, before the majestic thought of Death or the new Myth of Nature, that the two faculties of the poet’s genius met for mutual support. Only at rare intervals did he allow himself to make artistic use of mere mythology, as in the celebrated exordium of the first book, or the description of the Seasons in the fifth book (737–745). For the most part reason and fancy worked separately : after long passages of scientific explanation, Lucretius indulged his readers with those pictures of unparalleled sublimity and grace which are the charm of the whole poem ; or dropping the phraseology of atoms, void, motion, chance, he spoke at times of Nature as endowed with reason and a will (v. 186, 811, 846).

It would be beyond the scope of this essay to discuss the particular form given by Lucretius to the Democritean philo-

sophy. He believed the universe to be composed of atoms, infinite in number, and variable, to a finite extent, in form, which drift slantingly through an infinite void. Their combinations under the conditions of what we call space and time are transitory, while they remain themselves imperishable. Consequently, as the soul itself is corporeally constituted, and as thought and sensation depend on mere material idola, men may divest themselves of any fear of the hereafter. There is no such thing as providence, nor do the gods concern themselves with the kaleidoscopic medley of atoms in transient combination which we call our world. The latter were points of supreme interest to Lucretius. He seems to have cared for the cosmology of Epicurus chiefly as it touched humanity through ethics and religion. To impartial observers, the identity or the divergence of the forms assumed by scientific hypothesis at different periods of the world's history is not a matter of much importance. Yet a peculiar interest has of late been given to the Lucretian materialism by the fact that physical speculation has returned to what is substantially the same ground. The most modern theories of evolution and of molecular structure may be stated in language which, allowing for the progress made by exact thought during the last twenty centuries, is singularly like that of Lucretius. The Roman poet knew fewer facts than are familiar to our men of science, and was far less able to analyse one puzzle into a whole group of unexplained phenomena. He had besides but a feeble grasp upon those discoveries which subserve the arts of life and practical utility. But as regards *absolute knowledge*—knowledge, that is to say, of what the universe really is, and of how it became what it seems to us to be—Lucretius stood at the same point of ignorance as we, after the labours of Darwin and of Spencer, of Helmholtz and of Huxley, still do. Ontological speculation is as barren now as then, and the problems of existence still remain insoluble. The chief difference indeed

between him and modern investigators is that they have been lessoned by the experience of the last two thousand years to know better the depths of human ignorance, and the directions in which it is possible to sound them.

It may not be uninteresting to collect a few passages in which the Roman poet has expressed in his hexameters the lines of thought adopted by our most advanced theorists. Here is the general conception of Nature, working by her own laws toward the achievement of that result which we apprehend through the medium of the senses (ii. 1090).

Quae bene cognita si teneas, natura videtur
libera continuo dominis privata superbis
ipsa sua per se sponte omnia dis agere expers.

Here again is a demonstration of the absurdity of supposing that the world was made for the use of men (v. 156) :—

dicere porro hominum causa voluisse parare
praeclaram mundi naturam proptereaque
adlaudabile opus divom laudare decere
aeternumque putare atque inmortale futurum
nec fas esse, deum quod sit ratione vetusta
gentibus humanis fundatum perpetuo aevo,
sollicitare suis ulla vi ex sedibus umquam
nec verbis vexare et ab imo evertere summa,
cetera de genere hoc adfingere et addere, Memmi,
desiperest.

A like cogent rhetoric is directed against the arguments of teleology (iv. 823) :—

Illud in his rebus vitium vementer avessis
effugere, errorem vitareque praemetuenter,
lumina ne facias oculorum clara creata,
prospicere ut possemus, et ut proferre queamus
proceros passus, ideo fastigia posse
surarum ac feminum pedibus fundata plicari,
bracchia tum porro validis ex apta lacertis
esse manusque datas utraque ex parte ministras,
ut facere ad vitam possemus quae foret usus.
cetera de genere hoc inter quaecumque pretantur
omnia perversa praeponsta sunt ratione,

nil ideo quoniam natumst in corpore ut uti
possemus, sed quod natumst id procreat usum.
nec fuit ante videre oculorum lumina nata
nec dictis orare prius quam lingua creatast,
sed potius longe linguae praecessit origo
sermonem multoque creatae sunt prius aures
quam sonus est auditus, et omnia denique membra
ante fuere, ut opinor, eorum quam foret usus.
haud igitur potuere utendi crescere causa.

The ultimate dissolution and the gradual decay of the terrestrial globe is set forth in the following luminous passage (ii. 1148) :—

Sic igitur magni quoque circum moenia mundi
expugnata dabunt labem putrisque ruinas.
iamque adeo fracta est aetas effetaque tellus
vix animalia parva creat quae cuncta creavit
saecula deditque ferarum ingentia corpora partu.¹

The same mind which recognised these probabilities knew also that our globe is not single, but that it forms one among an infinity of sister orbs (ii. 1084) :—

quapropter caelum simili ratione fatendumst
terramque et solem lunam mare, cetera quae sunt,
non esse unica, sed numero magis innumerali.²

When Lucretius takes upon himself to describe the process of becoming which made the world what it now is, he seems to incline to a theory not at all dissimilar to that of unassisted evolution (v. 419) :—

nam certe neque consilio primordia rerum
ordine se suo quaeque sagaci mente locarunt
nec quos quaeque darent motus pepigere profecto,
sed quia multa modis multis primordia rerum
ex infinito iam tempore percita plagis
ponderibusque suis consuerunt concita ferri

¹ Compare book v. 306–317 on the evidences of decay continually at work in the fabric of the world.

² The same truth is insisted on with even greater force of language in vi. 649–652.

omnimodisque coire atque omnia pertemptare,
quaecumque inter se possent congressa creare,
propterea fit uti magnum volgata per aevom
omne genus coetus et motus experiundo
tandem convenient ea quae convecta repente
magnarum rerum fiunt exordia saepe,
terrai maris et caeli generisque animantum.

Entering into the details of the process, he describes the many ill-formed, amorphous beginnings of organised life upon the globe, which came to nothing, 'since nature set a ban upon their increase' (v. 837-848); and then proceeds to explain how, in the struggle for existence, the stronger prevailed over the weaker (v. 855-863). What is really interesting in this exposition is that Lucretius ascribes to nature the volition ('convertebat ibi natura foramina terræ ; ' 'quoniam natura abs-terruit auctum') which has recently been attributed by materialistic speculators to the same maternal power.

To press these points, and to neglect the gap which separates Lucretius from thinkers fortified by the discoveries of modern chemistry, astronomy, physiology, and so forth, would be childish. All we can do is to point to the fact that the circumambient atmosphere of human ignorance, with reference to the main matters of speculation, remains undissipated. The mass of experience acquired since the age of Lucretius is enormous, and is infinitely valuable; while our power of tabulating, methodising, and extending the sphere of experimental knowledge seems to be unlimited. Only ontological deductions, whether negative or affirmative, remain pretty much where they were then.

The fame of Lucretius, however, rests not on this foundation of hypothesis. In his poetry lies the secret of a charm which he will continue to exercise as long as humanity chooses to read Latin verse. No poet has created a world of larger and nobler images, designed with the *sprezzatura* of indifference to mere gracefulness, but all the more fascinating because of

the artist's negligence. There is something monumental in the effect produced by his large-sounding single epithets and simple names. We are at home with the daemonic life of nature when he chooses to bring Pan and his following before our eyes (iv. 580). Or, again, the Seasons pass like figures on some frieze of Mantegna, to which, by divine accident, has been added the glow of Titian's colouring¹ (v. 737) :—

it ver et Venus, et veris praenuntius ante
 pennatus graditur zephyrus, vestigia propter
 Flora quibus mater praespargens ante viai
 cuncta coloribus egregiis et odoribus opplet.
 inde loci sequitur calor aridus et comes una
 pulverulenta Ceres et etesia flabra aquilonum.
 inde autumnus adit, graditur simul Euhius Euan.
 inde aliae tempestates ventique secuntur,
 altitonans Volturnus et austus fulmine pollens.
 tandem bruma nives adfert pigrumque rigorem,
 prodit hiems, sequitur crepitans hanc dentibus algor.

With what a noble style too are the holidays of the primeval pastoral folk described (v. 1379–1404). It is no mere celebration of the *bell' età dell' oro*: but we see the woodland glades, and hear the songs of shepherds, and feel the hush of summer among rustling forest trees, while at the same time all is far away, in a better, simpler, larger age. The sympathy of Lucretius for every form of country life was very noticeable. It belonged to that which was most deeply and sincerely poetic in the Latin genius, whence Virgil drew his sweetest strain of melancholy, and Horace his most unaffected pictures, and Catullus the tenderness of his best lines on Sirmio. No Roman surpassed the pathos with which Lucretius described the separation of a cow from her calf (ii. 352–365). The same note indeed was touched by Virgil in his lines upon the forlorn

¹ The elaborate illustration of the first four lines of this passage, painted by Botticelli (in the Florence Academy of Fine Arts), proves Botticelli's incapacity or unwillingness to deal with the subject in the spirit of the original. It is graceful and 'subtle' enough, but not Lucretian.

nightingale, and in the peroration to the third 'Georgic.' But the style of Virgil is more studied, the feeling more artistically elaborated. It would be difficult to parallel such Lucretian passages in Greek poetry. The Greeks lacked an undefinable something of rusticity which dignified the Latin race. This quality was not altogether different from what we call homeliness. Looking at the busts of Romans, and noticing their resemblance to English country gentlemen, I have sometimes wondered whether the Latin genius, just in those points where it differed from the Greek, was not approximated to the English.

All subjects needing a large style, brief and rapid, but at the same time luminous with imagination, were sure of the right treatment from Lucretius. This is shown by his enumeration of the celestial signs (v. 1188) :—

in caeloque deum sedes et templa locarunt,
per caelum volvi quia nox et luna videtur,
luna dies et nox et noctis signa severa
noctivagaeque faces caeli flammaeque volantes,
nubila sol imbris nix venti fulmina grando
et rapidi fremitus et murmura magna minarum.

Again, he never failed to rise to an occasion which required the display of fervid eloquence. The Roman eloquence, which in its energetic volubility was the chief force of Juvenal, added a tidal strength and stress of storm to the quick gathering thoughts of the greater poet. The exordia to the first and second books, the analysis of Love in the fourth, the praises of Epicurus in the third and fifth, the praises of Empedocles and Ennius in the first, the elaborate passage on the progress of civilisation in the fifth, and the description of the plague at Athens which closes the sixth, are noble instances of the sublimest poetry sustained and hurried onward by the volume of impassioned improvisation. It is difficult to imagine that Lucretius wrote slowly. The strange word *vociferari*, which he uses so often, and which the Romans of the Augustan age

almost dropped from their poetic vocabulary, seems exactly made to suit his utterance. Yet at times he tempers the full torrent of resonant utterance with divine tranquillity, and leaves upon our mind that sense of powerful aloofness from his subject, which only belongs to the mightiest poets in their most majestic moments. One instance of this rare felicity of style shall end the list of our quotations (v. 1194) :—

O genus infelix humanum, talia divis
cum tribuit facta atque iras adiunxit acerbas !
quantos tum gemitus ipsi sibi, quantaque nobis
volnera, quas lacrimas peperere minorib' nostris !
nec pietas ullast velatum saepe videri
vertier ad lapidem atque omnis accedere ad aras
nec procumbere humi prostratum et pandere palmas
ante deum delubra nec aras sanguine multo
spargere quadrupedum nec votis nectere vota,
sed mage pacata posse omnia mente tueri.
nam cum suspicimus magni caelestia mundi
templa, super stellisque micantibus aethera fixum,
et venit in mentem solis lunaeque viarum,
tunc aliis oppressa malis in pectora cura
illa quoque expergefactum caput erigere infinit,
ne quae forte deum nobis immensa potestas
sit, vario motu quae candida sidera verset.
temptat enim dubiam mentem rationis egestas,
ecquaenam fuerit mundi genitalis origo,
et simul ecquaenae sit finis, quoad moenia mundi
solliciti motus hunc possint ferre laborem,
an divinitus aeterna donata salute
perpetuo possint aevi labentia tractu
immensi validas aevi contemnere viris.

It would be impossible to adduce from any other poet a passage in which the deepest doubts and darkest terrors and most vexing questions that beset the soul, are touched with an eloquence more stately and a pathos more sublime. Without losing the sense of humanity, we are carried off into the infinite. Such poetry is as imperishable as the subject of which it treats.

FLORENCE AND THE MEDICI.

Di Firenze in prima si divisono intra loro i nobili, dipoi i nobili e il popolo, e in ultimo il popolo e la plebe; e molte volte occorse che una di queste parti rimasa superiore, si divise in due.—MACHIAVELLI.

I.

FLORENCE, like all Italian cities, owed her independence to the duel of the Papacy and Empire. The transference of the imperial authority beyond the Alps had enabled the burghs of Lombardy and Tuscany to establish a form of self-government. This government was based upon the old municipal organisation of duumvirs and decemvirs. It was, in fact, nothing more or less than a survival from the ancient Roman system. The proof of this was, that while vindicating their rights as towns, the free cities never questioned the validity of the imperial title. Even after the peace of Constance in 1183, when Frederick Barbarossa acknowledged their autonomy, they received within their walls a supreme magistrate, with power of life and death and ultimate appeal in all decisive questions, whose title of *Potestà* indicated that he represented the imperial power—*Potestas*. It was not by the assertion of any right, so much as by the growth of custom, and by the weakness of the Emperors, that in course of time each city became a sovereign State. The theoretical supremacy of the Empire prevented any other authority from taking the first place in Italy. On the other hand, the practical inefficiency of the

Emperors to play their part encouraged the establishment of numerous minor powers amenable to no controlling discipline.

The free cities derived their strength from industry, and had nothing in common with the nobles of the surrounding country. Broadly speaking, the population of the towns included what remained in Italy of the old Roman people. This Roman stock was nowhere stronger than in Florence and Venice—Florence defended from barbarian incursions by her mountains and marshes, Venice by the isolation of her lagoons. The nobles, on the contrary, were mostly of foreign origin—Germans, Franks, and Lombards, who had established themselves as feudal lords in castles apart from the cities. The force which the burghs acquired as industrial communities was soon turned against these nobles. The larger cities, like Milan and Florence, began to make war upon the lords of castles, and to absorb into their own territory the small towns and villages around them. Thus in the social economy of the Italians there were two antagonistic elements ready to range themselves beneath any banners that should give the form of legitimate warfare to their mutual hostility. It was the policy of the Church in the twelfth century to support the cause of the cities, using them as a weapon against the Empire, and stimulating the growing ambition of the burghers. In this way Italy came to be divided into the two world-famous factions known as Guelf and Ghibelline. The struggle between Guelf and Ghibelline was the struggle of the Papacy for the depression of the Empire, the struggle of the great burghs face to face with feudalism, the struggle of the old Italic stock enclosed in cities with the foreign nobles established in fortresses. When the Church had finally triumphed by the extirpation of the House of Hohenstaufen, this conflict of Guelf and Ghibelline was really ended. Until the reign of Charles V. no Emperor interfered to any purpose in Italian affairs. At the same time the Popes ceased to wield a formidable power. Having won

the battle by calling in the French, they suffered the consequences of this policy by losing their hold on Italy during the long period of their exile at Avignon. The Italians, left without either Pope or Emperor, were free to pursue their course of internal development, and to prosecute their quarrels among themselves. But though the names of Guelf and Ghibelline lost their old significance after the year 1266 (the date of King Manfred's death), these two factions had so divided Italy that they continued to play a prominent part in her annals. Guelf still meant constitutional autonomy, meant the burgher as against the noble, meant industry as opposed to feudal lordship. Ghibelline meant the rule of the few over the many, meant tyranny, meant the interest of the noble as against the merchant and the citizen. These broad distinctions must be borne in mind, if we seek to understand how it was that a city like Florence continued to be governed by parties, the European force of which had passed away.

II.

Florence first rose into importance during the papacy of Innocent III. Up to this date she had been a town of second-rate distinction even in Tuscany. Pisa was more powerful by arms and commerce. Lucca was the old seat of the dukes and marquises of Tuscany. But between the years 1200 and 1250 Florence assumed the place she was to hold thenceforward, by heading the league of Tuscan cities formed to support the Guelf party against the Ghibellines. Formally adopting the Guelf cause, the Florentines made themselves the champions of municipal liberty in Central Italy ; and while they declared war against the Ghibelline cities, they endeavoured to stamp out the very name of noble in their State. It is not needful to describe the varying fortunes of the Guelfs and Ghibellines, the

burghers and the nobles, during the thirteenth and the first half of the fourteenth centuries. Suffice it to say that through all the vicissitudes of that stormy period the name Guelf became more and more associated with republican freedom in Florence. At last, after the final triumph of that party in 1233, the Guelfs remained victors in the city. Associating the glory of their independence with Guelf principles, the citizens of Florence perpetuated within their State a faction that, in its turn, was destined to prove perilous to liberty.

When it became clear that the republic was to rule itself henceforth untrammelled by imperial interference, the people divided themselves into six districts, and chose for each district two Ancients, who administered the government in concert with the *Potestà* and the Captain of the People. The Ancients were a relic of the old Roman municipal organisation. The *Potestà*, who was invariably a noble foreigner selected by the people, represented the extinct imperial right, and exercised the power of life and death within the city. The Captain of the People, who was also a foreigner, headed the burghers in their military capacity, for at that period the troops were levied from the citizens themselves in twenty companies. The body of the citizens, or the *popolo*, were ultimately sovereigns in the State. Assembled under the banners of their several companies, they formed a *parlamento* for delegating their own power to each successive government. Their representatives, again, arranged in two councils, called the Council of the People and the Council of the Commune, under the presidency of the Captain of the People and the *Potestà*, ratified the measures which had previously been proposed and carried by the executive authority or *Signoria*. Under this simple State system the Florentines placed themselves at the head of the Tuscan League, fought the battles of the Church, asserted their sovereignty by issuing the golden florin of the republic, and flourished until 1266.

III.

In that year an important change was effected in the Constitution. The whole population of Florence consisted, on the one hand, of nobles or Grandi, as they were called in Tuscany, and on the other hand of working people. The latter, divided into traders and handicraftsmen, were distributed in guilds called Arti ; and at that time there were seven Greater and five Lesser Arti, the most influential of all being the Guild of the Wool Merchants. These guilds had their halls for meeting, their colleges of chief officers, their heads, called Consoli or Priors, and their flags. In 1266 it was decided that the administration of the commonwealth should be placed simply and wholly in the hands of the Arti, and the Priors of these industrial companies became the lords or Signory of Florence. No inhabitant of the city who had not enrolled himself as a craftsman in one of the guilds could exercise any function of burghership. To be *scioperato*, or without industry, was to be without power, without rank or place of honour in the State. The revolution which placed the Arts at the head of the republic had the practical effect of excluding the Grandi altogether from the government. Violent efforts were made by these noble families, potent through their territorial possessions and foreign connections, and trained from boyhood in the use of arms, to recover the place from which the new laws thrust them : but their menacing attitude, instead of intimidating the burghers, roused their anger and drove them to the passing of still more stringent laws. In 1283, after the Ghibellines had been defeated in the great battle of Campaldino, a series of severe enactments, called the Ordinances of Justice, were decreed against the unruly Grandi. All civic rights were taken from them ; the severest penalties were attached to their slightest infringement of municipal law ; their titles to land were limited ; the privilege of

living within the city walls was allowed them only under galling restrictions ; and, last not least, a supreme magistrate, named the Gonfalonier of Justice, was created for the special purpose of watching them and carrying out the penal code against them. Henceforward Florence was governed exclusively by merchants and artisans. The Grandi hastened to enrol themselves in the guilds, exchanging their former titles and dignities for the solid privilege of burghership. The exact parallel to this industrial constitution for a commonwealth, carrying on wars with emperors and princes, holding haughty captains in its pay, and dictating laws to subject cities, cannot, I think, be elsewhere found in history. It is as unique as the Florence of Dante and Giotto is unique. While the people was guarding itself thus stringently against the Grandi, a separate body was created for the special purpose of extirpating the Ghibellines. A permanent committee of vigilance, called the College or the Captains of the Guelf Party, was established. It was their function to administer the forfeited possessions of Ghibelline rebels, to hunt out suspected citizens, to prosecute them for Ghibellinism, to judge them, and to punish them as traitors to the commonwealth. This body, like a little State within the State, proved formidable to the republic itself through the unlimited and undefined sway it exercised over burghers whom it chose to tax with treason. In course of time it became the oligarchical element within the Florentine democracy, and threatened to change the free constitution of the city into a government conducted by a few powerful families.

There is no need to dwell in detail on the internal difficulties of Florence during the first half of the fourteenth century. Two main circumstances, however, require to be briefly noticed. These are (i.) the contest of the Blacks and Whites, so famous through the part played in it by Dante ; and (ii.) the tyranny of the Duke of Athens, Walter de Brienne. The feuds of the Blacks and Whites broke up the city into factions, and produced

such anarchy that at last it was found necessary to place the republic under the protection of foreign potentates. Charles of Valois was first chosen, and after him the Duke of Athens, who took up his residence in the city. Entrusted with dictatorial authority, he used his power to form a military despotism. Though his reign of violence lasted rather less than a year, it bore important fruits ; for the tyrant, seeking to support himself upon the favour of the common people, gave political power to the Lesser Arts at the expense of the Greater, and confused the old State-system by enlarging the democracy. The net result of these events for Florence was, first, that the city became habituated to rancorous party-strife, involving exiles and proscriptions ; and, secondly, that it lost its primitive social hierarchy of classes.

IV.

After the Guelfs had conquered the Ghibellines, and the people had absorbed the Grandi in their guilds, the next chapter in the troubled history of Florence was the division of the Popolo against itself. Civil strife now declared itself as a conflict between labour and capital. The members of the Lesser Arts, craftsmen who plied trades subordinate to those of the Greater Arts, rose up against their social and political superiors, demanding a larger share in the government, a more equal distribution of profits, higher wages, and privileges that should place them on an absolute equality with the wealthy merchants. It was in the year 1378 that the proletariat broke out into rebellion. Previous events had prepared the way for this revolt. First of all, the republic had been democratised through the destruction of the Grandi and through the popular policy pursued to gain his own ends by the Duke of Athens. Secondly, society had been shaken to its very foundation by the great plague of 1348. Both Boccaccio and Matteo Villani draw

lively pictures of the relaxed morality and loss of order consequent upon this terrible disaster ; nor had thirty years sufficed to restore their relative position to grades and ranks confounded by an overwhelming calamity. We may therefore reckon the great plague of 1348 among the causes which produced the anarchy of 1378. Rising in a mass to claim their privileges, the artisans ejected the Signory from the Public Palace, and for awhile Florence was at the mercy of the mob. It is worthy of notice that the Medici, whose name is scarcely known before this epoch, now came for one moment to the front. Salvestro de' Medici was Gonfalonier of Justice at the time when the tumult first broke out. He followed the faction of the handicraftsmen, and became the hero of the day. I cannot discover that he did more than extend a sort of passive protection to their cause. Yet there is no doubt that the attachment of the working classes to the house of Medici dates from this period. The rebellion of 1378 is known in Florentine history as the Tumult of the Ciompi. The name Ciompi strictly means the Wool-Carders. One set of operatives in the city, and that the largest, gave its title to the whole body of the labourers. For some months these craftsmen governed the republic, appointing their own Signory and passing laws in their own interest ; but, as is usual, the proletariat found itself incapable of sustained government. The ambition and discontent of the Ciompi foamed themselves away, and industrious working men began to see that trade was languishing and credit on the wane. By their own act at last they restored the government to the Priors of the Greater Arti. Still the movement had not been without grave consequences. It completed the levelling of classes, which had been steadily advancing from the first in Florence. After the Ciompi riot there was no longer not only any distinction between noble and burgher, but the distinction between greater and lesser guilds was practically swept away. The classes, parties, and degrees in the republic were so broken

up, ground down, and mingled, that thenceforth the true source of power in the State was wealth combined with personal ability. In other words, the proper political conditions had been formed for unscrupulous adventurers. Florence had become a democracy without social organisation, which might fall a prey to oligarchs or despots. What remained of deeply-rooted feuds or factions—animosities against the Grandi, hatred for the Ghibellines, jealousy of labour and capital—offered so many points of leverage for stirring the passions of the people and for covering personal ambition with a cloak of public zeal. The time was come for the Albizzi to attempt an oligarchy, and for the Medici to begin the enslavement of the State.

V.

The Constitution of Florence offered many points of weakness to the attacks of such intriguers. In the first place it was in its origin not a political but an industrial organisation—a simple group of guilds invested with the sovereign authority. Its two most powerful engines, the Gonfalonier of Justice and the Guelf College, had been formed, not with a view to the preservation of the government, but with the purpose of quelling the nobles and excluding a detested faction. It had no permanent head, like the Doge of Venice ; no fixed senate like the Venetian Grand Council ; its chief magistrates, the Signory, were elected for short periods of two months, and their mode of election was open to the gravest criticism. Supposed to be chosen by lot, they were really selected from lists drawn up by the factions in power from time to time. These factions contrived to exclude the names of all but their adherents from the bags, or *borse*, in which the burghers eligible for election had to be inscribed. Furthermore, it was not possible for this shifting Signory to conduct affairs requiring sustained effort and secret deliberation ; therefore recourse was being continually had to

dictatorial Commissions. The people, summoned in parliament upon the Great Square, were asked to confer plenipotentiary authority upon a committee called *Balia*, who proceeded to do what they chose in the State, and who retained power after the emergency for which they were created passed away. The same instability in the supreme magistracy led to the appointment of special commissioners for war, and special councils, or *Pratiche*, for the management of each department. Such supplementary commissions not only proved the weakness of the central authority, but they were always liable to be made the instruments of party warfare. The Guelf College was another and a different source of danger to the State. Not acting under the control of the Signory, but using its own initiative, this powerful body could proscribe and punish burghers on the mere suspicion of Ghibellinism. Though the Ghibelline faction had become an empty name, the Guelf College excluded from the franchise all and every whom they chose on any pretext to admonish. Under this mild phrase, *to admonish*, was concealed a cruel exercise of tyranny—it meant to warn a man that he was suspected of treason, and that he had better relinquish the exercise of his burghership. By free use of this engine of Admonition, the Guelf College rendered their enemies voiceless in the State, and were able to pack the Signory and the councils with their own creatures. Another important defect in the Florentine Constitution was the method of imposing taxes. This was done by no regular system. The party in power made what estimate it chose of a man's capacity to bear taxation, and called upon him for extraordinary loans. In this way citizens were frequently driven into bankruptcy and exile; and since to be a debtor to the State deprived a burgher of his civic rights, severe taxation was one of the best ways of silencing and neutralising a dissident.

I have enumerated these several causes of weakness in the Florentine State-system, partly because they show how irregu-

larly the Constitution had been formed by the patching and extension of a simple industrial machine to suit the needs of a great commonwealth ; partly because it was through these defects that the democracy merged gradually into a despotism. The art of the Medici consisted in a scientific comprehension of these very imperfections, a methodic use of them for their own purposes, and a steady opposition to any attempts made to substitute a stricter system. The Florentines had determined to be an industrial community, governing themselves on the co-operative principle, dividing profits, sharing losses, and exposing their magistrates to rigid scrutiny. All this in theory was excellent. Had they remained an unambitious and peaceful commonwealth, engaged in the wool and silk trade, it might have answered. Modern Europe might have admired the model of a communistic and commercial democracy. But when they engaged in aggressive wars, and sought to enslave sister-cities like Pisa and Lucca, it was soon found that their simple trading constitution would not serve. They had to piece it out with subordinate machinery, cumbrous, difficult to manage, ill-adapted to the original structure. Each limb of this subordinate machinery, moreover, was a *point d'appui* for insidious and self-seeking party leaders.

Florence, in the middle of the fourteenth century, was a vast beehive of industry. Distinctions of rank among burghers, qualified to vote and hold office, were theoretically unknown. Highly educated men, of more than princely wealth, spent their time in shops and counting-houses, and trained their sons to follow trades. Military service at this period was abandoned by the citizens ; they preferred to pay mercenary troops for the conduct of their wars. Nor was there, as in Venice, any outlet for their energies upon the seas. Florence had no navy, no great port—she only kept a small fleet for the protection of her commerce. Thus the vigour of the commonwealth was concentrated on itself ; while the influence of the

citizens, through their affiliated trading-houses, correspondents, and agents, extended like a network over Europe. In a community of this kind it was natural that wealth—rank and titles being absent—should alone confer distinction. Accordingly we find that out of the very bosom of the people a new plutocratic aristocracy begins to rise. The Grandi are no more ; but certain families achieve distinction by their riches, their numbers, their high spirit, and their ancient place of honour in the State. These nobles of the purse obtained the name of *Popolani Nobili*; and it was they who now began to play at high stakes for the supreme power. In all the subsequent vicissitudes of Florence every change takes place by intrigue and by clever manipulation of the political machine. Recourse is rarely had to violence of any kind, and the leaders of revolutions are men of the yard-measure, never of the sword. The despotism to which the republic eventually succumbed was no less commercial than the democracy had been. Florence in the days of her slavery remained a *Popolo*.

VI.

The opening of the second half of the fourteenth century had been signalised by the feuds of two great houses, both risen from the people. These were the Albizzi and the Ricci. At this epoch there had been a formal closing of the lists of burghers ;—henceforth no new families who might settle in the city could claim the franchise, vote in the assemblies, or hold magistracies. The Guelf College used their old engine of admonition to persecute *novi homines*, whom they dreaded as opponents. At the head of this formidable organisation the Albizzi placed themselves, and worked it with such skill that they succeeded in driving the Ricci out of all participation in the government. The tumult of the Ciompi formed but an

episode in their career toward oligarchy ; indeed, that revolution only rendered the political material of the Florentine republic more plastic in the hands of intriguers, by removing the last vestiges of class distinctions and by confusing the old parties of the State.

When the Florentines in 1387 engaged in their long duel with Gian Galeazzo Visconti, the difficulty of conducting this war without some permanent central authority still further confirmed the power of the rising oligarchs. The Albizzi became daily more autocratic, until in 1393 their chief, Maso degli Albizzi, a man of strong will and prudent policy, was chosen Gonfalonier of Justice. Assuming the sway of a dictator he revised the list of burghers capable of holding office, struck out the private opponents of his house, and excluded all names but those of powerful families who were well affected towards an aristocratic government. The great house of the Alberti were exiled in a body, declared rebels, and deprived of their possessions, for no reason except that they seemed dangerous to the Albizzi. It was in vain that the people murmured against these arbitrary acts. The new rulers were omnipotent in the Signory, which they packed with their own men, in the great guilds, and in the Guelf College. All the machinery invented by the industrial community for its self-management and self-defence was controlled and manipulated by a close body of aristocrats, with the Albizzi at their head. It seemed as though Florence, without any visible alteration in her forms of government, was rapidly becoming an oligarchy even less open than the Venetian republic. Meanwhile the affairs of the State were most flourishing. The strong-handed masters of the city not only held the Duke of Milan in check, and prevented him from turning Italy into a kingdom ; they furthermore acquired the cities of Pisa, Livorno, Arezzo, Montepulciano, and Cortona, for Florence, making her the mistress of all Tuscany, with the exception of Siena, Lucca,

and Volterra. Maso degli Albizzi was the ruling spirit of the commonwealth, spending the enormous sum of 11,500,000 golden florins on war, raising sumptuous edifices, protecting the arts, and acting in general like a powerful and irresponsible prince.

In spite of public prosperity there were signs, however, that this rule of a few families could not last. Their government was only maintained by continual revision of the lists of burghers, by elimination of the disaffected, and by unremitting personal industry. They introduced no new machinery into the Constitution whereby the people might be deprived of its titular sovereignty, or their own dictatorship might be continued with a semblance of legality. Again, they neglected to win over the new nobles (*nobili popolani*) in a body to their cause; and thus they were surrounded by rivals ready to spring upon them when a false step should be made. The Albizzi oligarchy was a masterpiece of art, without any force to sustain it but the craft and energy of its constructors. It had not grown up, like the Venetian oligarchy, by the gradual assimilation to itself of all the vigour in the State. It was bound, sooner or later, to yield to the renascent impulse of democracy inherent in Florentine institutions.

VII.

Maso degli Albizzi died in 1417. He was succeeded in the government by his old friend, Niccolo da Uzzano, a man of great eloquence and wisdom, whose single word swayed the councils of the people as he listed. Together with him acted Maso's son, Rinaldo, a youth of even more brilliant talents than his father, frank, noble, and high-spirited, but far less cautious.

The oligarchy, which these two men undertook to manage, had accumulated against itself the discontent of overtaxed,

disfranchised, jealous burghers. The times, too, were bad. Pursuing the policy of Maso, the Albizzi engaged the city in a tedious and unsuccessful war with Filippo Maria Visconti, which cost 350,000 golden florins, and brought no credit. In order to meet extraordinary expenses they raised new public loans, thereby depreciating the value of the old Florentine funds. What was worse, they imposed forced subsidies with grievous inequality upon the burghers, passing over their friends and adherents, and burdening their opponents with more than could be borne. This imprudent financial policy began the ruin of the Albizzi. It caused a clamour in the city for a new system of more just taxation, which was too powerful to be resisted. The voice of the people made itself loudly heard ; and with the people on this occasion sided Giovanni de' Medici. This was in 1427.

It is here that the Medici appear upon that memorable scene where in the future they are to play the first part. Giovanni de' Medici did not belong to the same branch of his family as the Salvestro who favoured the people at the time of the Ciompi Tumult. But he adopted the same popular policy. To his sons Cosimo and Lorenzo he bequeathed on his deathbed the rule that they should invariably adhere to the cause of the multitude, found their influence on that, and avoid the arts of factious and ambitious leaders. In his own life he had pursued this course of conduct, acquiring a reputation for civic moderation and impartiality that endeared him to the people and stood his children in good stead. Early in his youth Giovanni found himself almost destitute by reason of the imposts charged upon him by the oligarchs. He possessed, however, the genius for money-making to a rare degree, and passed his manhood as a banker, amassing the largest fortune of any private citizen in Italy. In his old age he devoted himself to the organisation of his colossal trading business, and abstained, as far as possible, from political intrigues. Men

observed that they rarely met him in the Public Palace or on the Great Square.

Cosimo de' Medici was thirty years old when his father Giovanni died, in 1429. During his youth he had devoted all his time and energy to business, mastering the complicated affairs of Giovanni's banking-house, and travelling far and wide through Europe to extend its connections. This education made him a consummate financier ; and those who knew him best were convinced that his ambition was set on great things. However quietly he might begin, it was clear that he intended to match himself, as a leader of the plebeians, against the Albizzi. The foundations he prepared for future action were equally characteristic of the man, of Florence, and of the age. Commanding the enormous capital of the Medicean bank he contrived, at any sacrifice of temporary convenience, to lend money to the State for war expenses, engrossing in his own hands a large portion of the public debt of Florence. At the same time his agencies in various European capitals enabled him to keep his own wealth floating far beyond the reach of foes within the city. A few years of this system ended in so complete a confusion between Cosimo's trade and the finances of Florence that the bankruptcy of the Medici, however caused, would have compromised the credit of the State and the fortunes of the fund-holders. Cosimo, in a word, made himself necessary to Florence by the wise use of his riches. Furthermore, he kept his eye upon the list of burghers, lending money to needy citizens, putting good things in the way of struggling traders, building up the fortunes of men who were disposed to favour his party in the State, ruining his opponents by the legitimate process of commercial competition, and, when occasion offered, introducing new voters into the Florentine Council by paying off the debts of those who were disqualified by poverty from using the franchise. While his capital was continually increasing he lived frugally, and em-

ployed his wealth solely for the consolidation of his political influence. By these arts Cosimo became formidable to the oligarchs and beloved by the people. His supporters were numerous, and held together by the bonds of immediate necessity or personal cupidity. The plebeians and the merchants were all on his side. The Grandi and the Ammoniti, excluded from the State by the practices of the Albizzi, had more to hope from the Medicean party than from the few families who still contrived to hold the reins of government. It was clear that a conflict to the death must soon commence between the oligarchy and this new faction.

VIII.

At last, in 1433, war was declared. The first blow was struck by Rinaldo degli Albizzi, who put himself in the wrong by attacking a citizen indispensable to the people at large, and guilty of no unconstitutional act. On September 7th of that year, a year decisive for the future destinies of Florence, he summoned Cosimo to the Public Palace, which he had previously occupied with troops at his command. There he declared him a rebel to the State, and had him imprisoned in a little square room in the central tower. The tocsin was sounded ; the people were assembled in parliament upon the piazza. The Albizzi held the main streets with armed men, and forced the Florentines to place plenipotentiary power for the administration of the commonwealth at this crisis in the hands of a Balia, or committee selected by themselves. It was always thus that acts of high tyranny were effected in Florence. A show of legality was secured by gaining the compulsory sanction of the people, driven by soldiery into the public square, and hastily ordered to recognise the authority of their oppressors.

The bill of indictment against the Medici accused them of sedition in the year 1378, that is in the year of the Ciompi Tumult, and of treasonable practice during the whole course of the Albizzi administration. It also strove to fix upon them the odium of the unsuccessful war against the town of Lucca. As soon as the Albizzi had unmasked their batteries, Lorenzo de' Medici managed to escape from the city, and took with him his brother Cosimo's children to Venice. Cosimo remained shut up within the little room called Barberia in Arnolfo's tower. From that high eagle's nest the sight can range Valdarno far and wide. Florence with her towers and domes lies below ; and the blue peaks of Carrara close a prospect westward than which, with its villa-jewelled slopes and fertile gardens, there is nought more beautiful upon the face of earth. The prisoner can have paid but little heed to this fair landscape. He heard the frequent ringing of the great bell that called the Florentines to council, the tramp of armed men on the piazza, the coming and going of the burghers in the palace halls beneath. On all sides lurked anxiety and fear of death. Each mouthful he tasted might be poisoned. For many days he partook of only bread and water, till his gaoler restored his confidence by sharing all his meals. In this peril he abode twenty-four days. The Albizzi, in concert with the Balia they had formed, were consulting what they might venture to do with him. Some voted for his execution. Others feared the popular favour, and thought that if they killed Cosimo this act would ruin their own power. The nobler natures among them determined to proceed by constitutional measures. At last, upon September 29th, it was settled that Cosimo should be exiled to Padua for ten years. The Medici were declared Grandi, by way of excluding them from political rights. But their property remained untouched ; and on October 3rd, Cosimo was released.

On the same day Cosimo took his departure. His journey

northward resembled a triumphant progress. He left Florence a simple burgher ; he entered Venice a powerful prince. Though the Albizzi seemed to have gained the day, they had really cut away the ground beneath their feet. They committed the fatal mistake of doing both too much and too little —too much because they declared war against an innocent man, and roused the sympathies of the whole people in his behalf ; too little, because they had not the nerve to complete their act by killing him outright and extirpating his party. Machiavelli, in one of his profoundest and most cynical critiques, remarks that few men know how to be thoroughly bad with honour to themselves. Their will is evil ; but the grain of good in them—some fear of public opinion, some repugnance to committing a signal crime—paralyses their arm at the moment when it ought to have been raised to strike. He instances Gian Paolo Baglioni's omission to murder Julius II., when that Pope placed himself within his clutches at Perugia. He might also have instanced Rinaldo degli Albizzi's refusal to push things to extremities by murdering Cosimo. It was the combination of despotic violence in the exile of Cosimo with constitutional moderation in the preservation of his life, that betrayed the weakness of the oligarchs and restored confidence to the Medicean party.

IX.

In the course of the year 1434 this party began to hold up its head. Powerful as the Albizzi were, they only retained the government by artifice ; and now they had done a deed which put at nought their former arts and intrigues. A Signory favourable to the Medici came into office, and on September 26, 1434, Rinaldo in his turn was summoned to the palace and declared a rebel. He strove to raise the forces of his party, and entered the piazza at the head of eight hundred men.

The menacing attitude of the people, however, made resistance perilous. Rinaldo disbanded his troops, and placed himself under the protection of Pope Eugenius IV., who was then resident in Florence. This act of submission proved that Rinaldo had not the courage or the cruelty to try the chance of civil war. Whatever his motives may have been, he lost his hold upon the State beyond recovery. On September 29th, a new parliament was summoned ; on October 2nd, Cosimo was recalled from exile and the Albizzi were banished. The intercession of the Pope procured for them nothing but the liberty to leave Florence unmolested. Rinaldo turned his back upon the city he had governed, never to set foot in it again. On October 6th, Cosimo, having passed through Padua, Ferrara, and Modena like a conqueror, re-entered the town amid the plaudits of the people, and took up his dwelling as an honoured guest in the Palace of the Republic. The subsequent history of Florence is the history of his family. In after years the Medici loved to remember this return of Cosimo. His triumphal reception was painted in fresco on the walls of their villa at Cajano under the transparent allegory of Cicero's entrance into Rome.

X.

By their brief exile the Medici had gained the credit of injured innocence, the fame of martyrdom in the popular cause. Their foes had struck the first blow, and in striking at them had seemed to aim against the liberties of the republic. The mere failure of their adversaries to hold the power they had acquired, handed over this power to the Medici ; and the reprisals which the Medici began to take had the show of justice, not of personal hatred, or of petty vengeance. Cosimo was a true Florentine. He disliked violence, because he knew that blood spilt cries for blood. His passions, too, were cool

and temperate. No gust of anger, no intoxication of success, destroyed his balance. His one object, the consolidation of power for his family on the basis of popular favour, was kept steadily in view ; and he would do nothing that might compromise that end. Yet he was neither generous nor merciful. We therefore find that from the first moment of his return to Florence he instituted a system of pitiless and unforgiving persecution against his old opponents. The Albizzi were banished, root and branch, with all their followers, consigned to lonely and often to unwholesome stations through the length and breadth of Italy. If they broke the bonds assigned them, they were forthwith declared traitors and their property was confiscated. After a long series of years, by merely keeping in force the first sentence pronounced upon them, Cosimo had the cruel satisfaction of seeing the whole of that proud oligarchy die out by slow degrees in the insufferable tedium of solitude and exile. Even the high-souled Palla degli Strozzi, who had striven to remain neutral, and whose wealth and talents were devoted to the revival of classical studies, was proscribed because to Cosimo he seemed too powerful. Separated from his children, he died in banishment at Padua. In this way the return of the Medici involved the loss to Florence of some noble citizens, who might perchance have checked the Medicean tyranny if they had stayed to guide the State. The plebeians, raised to wealth and influence by Cosimo before his exile, now took the lead in the republic. He used these men as cat's-paws, rarely putting himself forward or allowing his own name to appear, but pulling the wires of government in privacy by means of intermediate agents. The Medicean party was called at first *Puccini* from a certain Puccio, whose name was better known in caucus or committee than that of his real master.

To rule through these creatures of his own making taxed all the ingenuity of Cosimo ; but his profound and

subtle intellect was suited to the task, and he found unlimited pleasure in the exercise of his consummate craft. We have already seen to what extent he used his riches for the acquisition of political influence. Now that he had come to power, he continued the same method, packing the Signory and the Councils with men whom he could hold by debt between his thumb and finger. His command of the public moneys enabled him to wink at peculation in State offices ; it was part of his system to bind magistrates and secretaries to his interest by their consciousness of guilt condoned but not forgotten. Not a few, moreover, owed their living to the appointments he procured for them. While he thus controlled the wheel-work of the commonwealth by means of organised corruption, he borrowed the arts of his old enemies to oppress dissentient citizens. If a man took an independent line in voting, and refused allegiance to the Medicean party, he was marked out for persecution. No violence was used ; but he found himself hampered in his commerce—money, plentiful for others, became scarce for him ; his competitors in trade were subsidised to undersell him. And while the avenues of industry were closed, his fortune was taxed above its value, until he had to sell at a loss in order to discharge his public obligations. In the first twenty years of the Medicean rule, seventy families had to pay 4,875,000 golden florins of extraordinary imposts, fixed by arbitrary assessment.

The more patriotic members of his party looked with dread and loathing on this system of corruption and exclusion. To their remonstrances Cosimo replied in four memorable sayings : ‘ Better the State spoiled than the State not ours.’ ‘ Governments cannot be carried on with paternosters.’ ‘ An ell of scarlet makes a burgher.’ ‘ I aim at finite ends.’ These maxims represent the whole man,—first, in his egotism, eager to gain Florence for his family, at any risk of her ruin ; secondly, in his cynical acceptance of base means to selfish ends ; thirdly

in his bourgeois belief that money makes a man, and fine clothes suffice for a citizen ; fourthly, in his worldly ambition bent on positive success. It was, in fact, his policy to reduce Florence to the condition of a rotten borough : nor did this policy fail. One notable sign of the influence he exercised was the change which now came over the foreign relations of the republic. Up to the date of his dictatorship Florence had uniformly fought the battle of freedom in Italy. It was the chief merit of the Albizzi oligarchy that they continued the traditions of the mediæval State, and by their vigorous action checked the growth of the Visconti. Though they engrossed the government they never forgot that they were first of all things Florentines, and only in the second place men who owed their power and influence to office. In a word, they acted like patriotic Tories, like republican patricians. Therefore they would not ally themselves with tyrants or countenance the enslavement of free cities by armed despots. Their subjugation of the Tuscan burghs to Florence was itself part of a grand republican policy. Cosimo changed all this. When the Visconti dynasty ended by the death of Filippo Maria in 1447, there was a chance of restoring the independence of Lombardy. Milan in effect declared herself a republic, and by the aid of Florence she might at this moment have maintained her liberty. Cosimo, however, entered into treaty with Francesco Sforza, supplied him with money, guaranteed him against Florentine interference, and saw with satisfaction how he reduced the duchy to his military tyranny. The Medici were conscious that they, selfishly, had most to gain by supporting despots who in time of need might help them to confirm their own authority. With the same end in view, when the legitimate line of the Bentivogli was extinguished, Cosimo hunted out a bastard pretender of that family, presented him to the chiefs of the Bentivogli faction, and had him placed upon the seat of his supposed ancestors at Bologna. This

young man, a certain Santi da Cascese, presumed to be the son of Ercole de' Bentivogli, was an artisan in a wool factory when Cosimo set eyes upon him. At first Santi refused the dangerous honour of governing a proud republic ; but the intrigues of Cosimo prevailed, and the obscure craftsman ended his days a powerful prince.

By the arts I have attempted to describe, Cosimo in the course of his long life absorbed the forces of the republic into himself. While he shunned the external signs of despotic power he made himself the master of the State. His complexion was of a pale olive ; his stature short ; abstemious and simple in his habits, affable in conversation, sparing of speech, he knew how to combine that burgher-like civility for which the Romans praised Augustus, with the reality of a despotism all the more difficult to combat because it seemed nowhere and was everywhere. When he died, at the age of seventy-five, in 1464, the people whom he had enslaved, but whom he had neither injured nor insulted, honoured him with the title of *Pater Patriæ*. This was inscribed upon his tomb in S. Lorenzo. He left to posterity the fame of a great and generous patron,¹ the infamy of a cynical, self-seeking, bourgeois tyrant. Such combinations of contradictory qualities were common enough at the time of the Renaissance. Did not Machiavelli spend his days in tavern-brawls and low amours, his nights among the mighty spirits of the dead, with whom, when he had changed his country suit of homespun for the habit of the court, he found himself an honoured equal ?

¹ For an estimate of Cosimo's services to art and literature, his collection of libraries, his great buildings, his generosity to scholars, and his promotion of Greek studies, I may refer to my *Renaissance in Italy*: 'The Revival of Learning,' chap. iv.

XI.

Cosimo had shown consummate skill by governing Florence through a party created and raised to influence by himself. The jealousy of these adherents formed the chief difficulty with which his son Piero had to contend. Unless the Medici could manage to kick down the ladder whereby they had risen, they ran the risk of losing all. As on a former occasion, so now they profited by the mistakes of their antagonists. Three chief men of their own party, Diotisalvi Neroni, Agnolo Acciaiuoli, and Luca Pitti, determined to shake off the yoke of their masters, and to repay the Medici for what they owed by leading them to ruin. Niccolo Soderini, a patriot, indignant at the slow enslavement of his country, joined them. At first they strove to undermine the credit of the Medici with the Florentines by inducing Piero to call in the moneys placed at interest by his father in the hands of private citizens. This act was unpopular; but it did not suffice to move a revolution. To proceed by constitutional measures against the Medici was judged impolitic. Therefore the conspirators decided to take, if possible, Piero's life. The plot failed, chiefly owing to the coolness and the cunning of the young Lorenzo, Piero's eldest son. Public sympathy was strongly excited against the aggressors. Neroni, Acciaiuoli, and Soderini were exiled. Pitti was allowed to stay, dishonoured, powerless, and penniless, in Florence. Meanwhile, the failure of their foes had only served to strengthen the position of the Medici. The ladder had saved them the trouble of kicking it down.

The congratulations addressed on this occasion to Piero and Lorenzo by the ruling powers of Italy show that the Medici were already regarded as princes outside Florence. Lorenzo and Giuliano, the two sons of Piero, travelled abroad to the courts of Milan and Ferrara with the style and state of

more than simple citizens. At home they occupied the first place on all occasions of public ceremony, receiving royal visitors on terms of equality, and performing the hospitalities of the republic like men who had been born to represent its dignities. Lorenzo's marriage to Clarice Orsini, of the noble Roman house, was another sign that the Medici were advancing on the way toward despotism. Cosimo had avoided foreign alliances for his children. His descendants now judged themselves firmly planted enough to risk the odium of a princely match for the sake of the support outside the city they might win.

XII.

Piero de' Medici died in December 1469. His son Lorenzo was then barely twenty-two years of age. The chiefs of the Medicean party, all-powerful in the State, held a council, in which they resolved to place him in the same position as his father and grandfather. This resolve seems to have been formed after mature deliberation, on the ground that the existing conditions of Italian politics rendered it impossible to conduct the government without a presidential head. Florence, though still a democracy, required a permanent chief to treat on an equality with the princes of the leading cities. Here we may note the prudence of Cosimo's foreign policy. When he helped to establish despots in Milan and Bologna he was rendering the presidency of his own family in Florence necessary.

Lorenzo, having received this invitation, called attention to his youth and inexperience. Yet he did not refuse it; and, after a graceful display of diffidence, he accepted the charge, entering thus upon that famous political career, in the course of which he not only established and maintained a balance of power in Italy, with Florence for the central city, but also con-

trived to remodel the government of the republic in the interest of his own family and to strengthen the Medici by relations with the Papal See.

The extraordinary versatility of this man's intellectual and social gifts, his participation in all the literary and philosophical interests of his century, his large and liberal patronage of art, and the gaiety with which he joined the people of Florence in their pastimes—Mayday games and Carnival festivities—strengthened his hold upon the city in an age devoted to culture and refined pleasure. Whatever was most brilliant in the spirit of the Italian Renaissance seemed to be incarnate in Lorenzo. Not merely as a patron and a dilettante, but as a poet and a critic, a philosopher and scholar, he proved himself adequate to the varied intellectual ambitions of his country. Penetrated with the passion for erudition which distinguished Florence in the fifteenth century, familiar with her painters and her sculptors, deeply read in the works of her great poets, he conceived the ideal of infusing the spirit of antique civility into modern life, and of effecting for society what the artists were performing in their own sphere. To preserve the native character of the Florentine genius, while he added the grace of classic form, was the aim to which his tastes and instincts led him. At the same time, while he made himself the master of Florentine revels and the Augustus of Renaissance literature, he took care that beneath his carnival masks and ball-dress should be concealed the chains which he was forging for the republic.

What he lacked, with so much mental brilliancy, was moral greatness. The age he lived in was an age of selfish despots, treacherous generals, godless priests. It was an age of intellectual vigour and artistic creativeness ; but it was also an age of mean ambition, sordid policy, and vitiated principles. Lorenzo remained true in all respects to the genius of this age : true to its enthusiasm for antique culture, true to its passion for art,

true to its refined love of pleasure ; but true also to its petty political intrigues, to its cynical selfishness, to its lack of heroism. For Florence he looked no higher and saw no further than Cosimo had done. If culture was his pastime, the enslavement of the city by bribery and corruption was the hard work of his manhood. As is the case with much Renaissance art, his life was worth more for its decorative detail than for its constructive design. In richness, versatility, variety, and exquisiteness of execution, it left little to be desired ; yet, viewed at a distance, and as a whole, it does not inspire us with a sense of architec-tonic majesty.

XIII.

Lorenzo's chief difficulties arose from the necessity under which, like Cosimo, he laboured of governing the city through its old institutions by means of a party. To keep the members of this party in good temper, and to gain their approval for the alterations he effected in the State-machinery of Florence, was the problem of his life. The successful solution of this problem was easier now, after two generations of the Medicean ascendency, than it had been at first. Meanwhile the people were maintained in good humour by public shows, ease, plenty, and a general laxity of discipline. The splendour of Lorenzo's foreign alliances and the consideration he received from all the Courts of Italy contributed in no small measure to his popularity and security at home. By using his authority over Florence to inspire respect abroad, and by using his foreign credit to impose upon the burghers, Lorenzo displayed the tact of a true Italian diplomatist. His genius for statecraft, as then understood, was indeed of a rare order, equally adapted to the conduct of a complicated foreign policy and to the control of a suspicious and variable Commonwealth. In one point alone he was inferior to his grandfather. He neglected,

commerce, and allowed his banking business to fall into disorder so hopeless that in course of time he ceased to be solvent. Meanwhile his personal expenses, both as a prince in his own palace, and as the representative of majesty in Florence, continually increased. The bankruptcy of the Medici, it had long been foreseen, would involve the public finances in serious confusion. And now, in order to retrieve his fortunes, Lorenzo was not only obliged to repudiate his debts to the exchequer, but had also to gain complete disposal of the State-purse. It was this necessity that drove him to effect the constitutional revolution of 1480, by which he substituted a Privy Council of seventy members for the old Councils of the State, absorbing the chief functions of the commonwealth into this single body, whom he practically nominated at pleasure. The same want of money led to the great scandal of his reign—the plundering of the Monte delle Doti, or State Insurance-Office Fund for securing dowers to the children of its creditors.

XIV.

While tracing the salient points of Lorenzo de' Medici's administration I have omitted to mention the important events which followed shortly after his accession to power in 1469. What happened between that date and 1480 was not only decisive for the future fortunes of the Casa Medici, but it was also eminently characteristic of the perils and the difficulties which beset Italian despots. The year 1471 was signalised by a visit by the Duke Galeazzo Maria Sforza of Milan, and his wife Bona of Savoy, to the Medici in Florence. They came attended by their whole Court—body-guards on horse and foot, ushers, pages, falconers, grooms, kennel-varlets, and huntsmen. Omitting the mere baggage service, their train counted two thousand horses. To mention this incident would

be superfluous, had not so acute an observer as Machiavelli marked it out as a turning-point in Florentine history. Now, for the first time, the democratic commonwealth saw its streets filled with a mob of courtiers. Masques, balls, and tournaments succeeded each other with magnificent variety ; and all the arts of Florence were pressed into the service of these festivals. Machiavelli says that the burghers lost the last remnant of their old austerity of manners, and became, like the degenerate Romans, ready to obey the masters who provided them with brilliant spectacles. They gazed with admiration on the pomp of Italian princes, their dissolute and godless living, their luxury and prodigal expenditure ; and when the Medici affected similar habits in the next generation, the people had no courage to resist the invasion of their pleasant vices.

In the same year, 1471, Volterra was reconquered for the Florentines by Frederick of Urbino. The honours of this victory, disgraced by a brutal sack of the conquered city, in violation of its articles of capitulation, were reserved for Lorenzo, who returned in triumph to Florence. More than ever he assumed the prince, and in his person undertook to represent the State.

In the same year, 1471, Francesco della Rovere was raised to the papacy with the memorable name of Sixtus IV. Sixtus was a man of violent temper and fierce passions, restless and impatiently ambitious, bent on the aggrandisement of the beautiful and wanton youths, his nephews. Of these the most aspiring was Girolamo Riario, for whom Sixtus bought the town of Imola from Taddeo Manfredi, in order that he might possess the title of count and the nucleus of a tyranny in the Romagna. This purchase thwarted the plans of Lorenzo, who wished to secure the same advantages for Florence. Smarting with the sense of disappointment, he forbade the Roman banker, Francesco Pazzi, to guarantee the purchase-money. By this act Lorenzo made two mortal foes—the Pope and

Francesco Pazzi. Francesco was a thin, pale, atrabilious fanatic, all nerve and passion, with a monomaniac intensity of purpose, and a will inflamed and guided by imagination—a man formed by nature for conspiracy, such a man, in fact, as Shakspere drew in Cassius. Maddened by Lorenzo's prohibition, he conceived the notion of overthrowing the Medici in Florence by a violent blow. Girolamo Riario entered into his views. So did Francesco Salviati, Archbishop of Pisa, who had private reasons for hostility. These men found no difficulty in winning over Sixtus to their plot ; nor is it possible to purge the Pope of participation in what followed. I need not describe by what means Francesco drew the other members of his family into the scheme, and how he secured the assistance of armed cutthroats. Suffice it to say that the chief conspirators, with the exception of the Count Girolamo, betook themselves to Florence, and there, after the failure of other attempts, decided to murder Lorenzo and his brother Giuliano in the cathedral on Sunday, the 26th of April, 1478. The moment when the priest at the high altar finished the mass, was fixed for the assassination. Everything was ready. The conspirators, by Judas kisses and embracements, had discovered that the young men wore no protective armour under their silken doublets. Pacing the aisle behind the choir, they feared no treason. And now the lives of both might easily have been secured, if at the last moment the courage of the hired assassins had not failed them. Murder, they said, was well enough ; but they could not bring themselves to stab men before the newly consecrated body of Christ. In this extremity a priest was found, who, "being accustomed to churches," had no scruples. He and another reprobate were told off to Lorenzo. Francesco de' Pazzi himself undertook Giuliano. The moment for attack arrived. Francesco plunged his dagger into the heart of Giuliano. Then, not satisfied with this death-blow, he struck again, and in his heat of passion

wounded his own thigh. Lorenzo escaped with a flesh-wound from the poniard of the priest, and rushed into the sacristy, where his friend Poliziano shut and held the brazen door. The plot had failed ; for Giuliano, of the two brothers, was the one whom the conspirators would the more willingly have spared. The whole church was in an uproar. The city rose in tumult. Rage and horror took possession of the people. They flew to the Palazzo Pubblico and to the houses of the Pazzi, hunted the conspirators from place to place, hung the archbishop by the neck from the palace windows, and, as they found fresh victims for their fury, strung them one by one in a ghastly row at his side above the Square. About one hundred in all were killed. None who had joined in the plot escaped ; for Lorenzo had long arms, and one man, who fled to Constantinople, was delivered over to his agents by the Sultan. Out of the whole Pazzi family only Guglielmo, the husband of Bianca de' Medici, was spared. When the tumult was over, Andrea del Castagno painted the portraits of the traitors head-downwards upon the walls of the Bargello Palace, in order that all men might know what fate awaited the foes of the Medici and of the State of Florence.¹ Meanwhile a bastard son of Giuliano's was received into the Medicean household, to perpetuate his lineage. This child, named Giulio, was destined to be famous in the annals of Italy and Florence under the title of Pope Clement VII.

XV.

As is usual when such plots miss their mark, the passions excited redounded to the profit of the injured party. The commonwealth felt that the blow struck at Lorenzo had been

¹ Giotto had painted the Duke of Athens, in like manner, on the same walls.

aimed at their majesty. Sixtus, on the other hand, could not contain his rage at the failure of so ably planned a *coup de main*. Ignoring that he had sanctioned the treason, that a priest had put his hand to the dagger, that the impious deed had been attempted in a church before the very Sacrament of Christ, whose vicar on earth he was, the Pope now excommunicated the Republic. The reason he alleged was, that the Florentines had dared to hang an archbishop.

Thus began a war to the death between Sixtus and Florence. The Pope inflamed the whole of Italy, and carried on a ruinous campaign in Tuscany. It seemed as though the republic might lose her subject cities, always ready to revolt when danger threatened the sovereign State. Lorenzo's position became critical. Sixtus made no secret of the hatred he bore him personally, declaring that he fought less with Florence than with the Medici. To support the odium of this long war and this heavy interdict alone, was more than he could do. His allies forsook him. Naples was enlisted on the Pope's side. Milan and the other States of Lombardy were occupied with their own affairs, and held aloof. In this extremity he saw that nothing but a bold step could save him. The league formed by Sixtus must be broken up at any risk, and, if possible, by his own ability. On the 6th of December, 1479, Lorenzo left Florence, unarmed and unattended, took ship at Leghorn, and proceeded to the court of the enemy, King Ferdinand, at Naples. Ferdinand was a cruel and treacherous sovereign, who had murdered his guest, Jacopo Piccinino, at a banquet given in his honour. But Ferdinand was the son of Alfonso, who, by address and eloquence, had gained a kingdom from his foe and jailor, Filippo Maria Visconti. Lorenzo calculated that he too, following Alfonso's policy, might prove to Ferdinand how little there was to gain from an alliance with Rome, how much Naples and Florence, firmly united together for offence and defence, might effect in Italy.

Only a student of those perilous times can appreciate the courage and the genius, the audacity combined with diplomatic penetration, displayed by Lorenzo at this crisis. He calmly walked into the lion's den, trusting he could tame the lion and teach it, and all in a few days. Nor did his expectation fail. Though Lorenzo was rather ugly than handsome, with a dark skin, heavy brows, powerful jaws, and nose sharp in the bridge and broad at the nostrils, without grace of carriage or melody of voice, he possessed what makes up for personal defects—the winning charm of eloquence in conversation, a subtle wit, profound knowledge of men, and tact allied to sympathy, which placed him always at the centre of the situation. Ferdinand received him kindly. The Neapolitan nobles admired his courage and were fascinated by his social talents. On March 1, 1480, he left Naples again, having won over the King by his arguments. When he reached Florence he was able to declare that he brought home a treaty of peace and alliance signed by the most powerful foe of the republic. The success of this bold enterprise endeared Lorenzo more than ever to his countrymen. In the same year they concluded a treaty with Sixtus, who was forced against his will to lay down arms by the capture of Otranto and the extreme peril of Turkish invasion. After the year 1480 Lorenzo remained sole master in Florence, the arbiter and peacemaker of the rest of Italy.

XVI.

The conjuration of the Pazzi was only one in a long series of similar conspiracies. Italian despots gained their power by violence and wielded it with craft. Violence and craft were therefore used against them. When the study of the classics had penetrated the nation with antique ideas of heroism, tyrannicide became a virtue. Princes were murdered with frightful

frequency. Thus Gian Maria Visconti was put to death at Milan in 1412 ; Galeazzo Maria Sforza in 1484 ; the Chiarelli of Fabriano were massacred in 1435 ; the Baglioni of Perugia in 1500 ; Girolamo Gentile planned the assassination of Galeazzo Sforza at Genoa in 1476 ; Niccolo d'Este conspired against his uncle Ercole in 1476 ; Stefano Porcari attempted the life of Nicholas V. at Rome in 1453 ; Lodovico Sforza narrowly escaped a violent death in 1453. I might multiply these instances beyond satiety. As it is, I have selected but a few examples falling, all but one, within the second half of the fifteenth century. Nearly all these attempts upon the lives of princes were made in church during the celebration of sacred offices. There was no superfluity of naughtiness, no wilful sacrilege, in this choice of an occasion. It only testified to the continual suspicion and guarded watchfulness maintained by tyrants. To strike at them except in church was almost impossible. Meanwhile the fate of the tyrannicides was uniform. Successful or not, they perished. Yet so grievous was the pressure of Italian despotism, so glorious was the ideal of Greek and Roman heroism, so passionate the temper of the people, that to kill a prince at any cost to self appeared the crown of manliness. This bloodshed exercised a delirious fascination : pure and base, personal and patriotic motives combined to add intensity of fixed and fiery purpose to the murderous impulse. Those then who, like the Medici, aspired to tyranny and sought to found a dynasty of princes, entered the arena against a host of unknown and unseen gladiators.

XVII.

On his death-bed, in 1492, Lorenzo lay between two men—Angelo Poliziano and Girolamo Savonarola. Poliziano incarnated the genial, radiant, godless spirit of fifteenth-century

humanism. Savonarola represented the conscience of Italy, self-convicted, amid all her greatness, of crimes that called for punishment. It is said that when Lorenzo asked the monk for absolution, Savonarola bade him first restore freedom to Florence. Lorenzo turned his face to the wall and was silent. How indeed could he make this city in a moment free, after sixty years of slow and systematic corruption? Savonarola left him, and he died unshriven. This legend is doubtful, though it rests on excellent if somewhat partial authority. It has, at any rate, the value of a mythus, since it epitomises the attitude assumed by the great preacher to the prince. Florence enslaved, the soul of Lorenzo cannot lay its burden down, but must go with all its sins upon it to the throne of God.

The year 1492 was a memorable year for Italy. In this year Lorenzo's death removed the keystone of the arch that had sustained the fabric of Italian federation. In this year Roderigo Borgia was elected Pope. In this year Columbus discovered America; Vasco de Gama soon after opened a new way to the Indies, and thus the commerce of the world passed from Italy to other nations. In this year the conquest of Granada gave unity to the Spanish nation. In this year France, through the life-long craft of Louis XI., was for the first time united under a young hot-headed sovereign. On every side of the political horizon storms threatened. It was clear that a new chapter of European history had been opened. Then Savonarola raised his voice, and cried that the crimes of Italy, the abominations of the Church, would speedily be punished. Events led rapidly to the fulfilment of this prophecy. Lorenzo's successor, Piero de' Medici, was a vain, irresolute, and hasty princeling, fond of display, proud of his skill in fencing and football-playing, with too much of the Orsini blood in his hot veins, with too little of the Medicean craft in his weak head. The Italian despots felt they could not trust Piero, and this want of confidence was probably the first

motive that impelled Lodovico Sforza to call Charles VIII. into Italy in 1494.

It will not be necessary to dwell upon this invasion of the French, except in so far as it affected Florence. Charles passed rapidly through Lombardy, engaged his army in the passes of the Apennines, and debouched upon the coast where the Magra divided Tuscany from Liguria. Here the fortresses of Sarzana and Pietra Santa, between the marble bulwark of Carrara and the Tuscan sea, stopped his further progress. The keys were held by the Florentines. To force these strong positions and to pass beyond them seemed impossible. It might have been impossible if Piero de' Medici had possessed a firmer will. As it was, he rode off to the French camp, delivered up the forts to Charles, bound the King by no engagements, and returned not otherwise than proud of his folly to Florence. A terrible reception awaited him. The Florentines, in their fury, had risen and sacked the Medicean palace. It was as much as Piero, with his brothers, could do to escape beyond the hills to Venice. The despotism of the Medici, so carefully built up, so artfully sustained and strengthened, was overthrown in a single day.

XVIII.

Before considering what happened in Florence after the expulsion of the Medici, it will be well to pause a moment and review the state in which Lorenzo had left his family. Piero, his eldest son, recognised as chief of the republic after his father's death, was married to Alfonsina Orsini, and was in his twenty-second year. Giovanni, his second son, a youth of seventeen, had just been made cardinal. This honour, of vast importance for the Casa Medici in the future, he owed to his sister Maddalena's marriage to Franceschetto Cybo, son of

Innocent VIII. The third of Lorenzo's sons, named Giuliano, was a boy of thirteen. Giulio, the bastard son of the elder Giuliano, was fourteen. These four princes formed the efficient strength of the Medici, the hope of the house ; and for each of them, with the exception of Piero, who died in exile, and of whom no more notice need be taken, a brilliant destiny was still in store. In the year 1495, however, they now wandered, homeless and helpless, through the cities of Italy, each of which was shaken to its foundations by the French invasion.

XIX.

Florence, left without the Medici, deprived of Pisa and other subject cities by the passage of the French army, with no leader but the monk Savonarola, now sought to reconstitute her liberties. During the domination of the Albizzi and the Medici the old order of the commonwealth had been completely broken up. The Arti had lost their primitive importance. The distinctions between the Grandi and the Popolani had practically passed away. In a democracy that has submitted to a lengthened course of tyranny, such extinction of its old life is inevitable. Yet the passion for liberty was still powerful ; and the busy brains of the Florentines were stored with experience gained from their previous vicissitudes, from the study of antique history, and from the observation of existing constitutions in the towns of Italy. They now determined to reorganise the State upon the model of the Venetian republic. The Signory was to remain, with its old institution of Priors, Gonfalonier, and College, elected for brief periods. These magistrates were to take the initiative in debate, to propose measures, and to consider plans of action. The real power of the State, for voting supplies and ratifying the measures of the Signory, was vested in a senate of one thousand members,

called the Grand Council, from whom a smaller body of forty, acting as intermediates between the Council and the Signory, were elected. It is said that the plan of this constitution originated with Savonarola; nor is there any doubt that he used all his influence in the pulpit of the Duomo to render it acceptable to the people. Whoever may have been responsible for its formation, the new government was carried in 1495, and a large hall for the assembly of the Grand Council was opened in the Public Palace.

Savonarola, meanwhile, had become the ruling spirit of Florence. He gained his great power as a preacher: he used it like a monk. The motive principle of his action was the passion for reform. To bring the Church back to its pristine state of purity, without altering its doctrine or suggesting any new form of creed; to purge Italy of ungodly customs; to overthrow the tyrants who encouraged evil living, and to place the power of the State in the hands of sober citizens: these were his objects. Though he set himself in bold opposition to the reigning Pope, he had no desire to destroy the spiritual supremacy of S. Peter's see. Though he burned with an enthusiastic zeal for liberty, and displayed rare genius for administration, he had no ambition to rule Florence like a dictator. Savonarola was neither a reformer in the northern sense of the word, nor yet a political demagogue. His sole wish was to see purity of manners and freedom of self-government re-established. With this end in view he bade the Florentines elect Christ as their supreme chief; and they did so. For the same end he abstained from appearing in the State Councils, and left the Constitution to work by its own laws. His personal influence he reserved for the pulpit; and here he was omnipotent. The people believed in him as a prophet. They turned to him as the man who knew what he wanted—as the voice of liberty, the soul of the new régime, the genius who could breathe into the commonwealth a breath of

fresh vitality. When, therefore, Savonarola preached a reform of manners, he was at once obeyed. Strict laws were passed enforcing sobriety, condemning trades of pleasure, reducing the gay customs of Florence to puritanical austerity.

Great stress has been laid upon this reaction of the monk-led populace against the vices of the past. Yet the historian is bound to pronounce that the reform effected by Savonarola was rather picturesque than vital. Like all violent revivals of pietism, it produced a no less violent reaction. The parties within the city who resented the interference of a preaching friar, joined with the Pope in Rome, who hated a contumacious schismatic in Savonarola. Assailed by these two forces at the same moment, and driven upon perilous ground by his own febrile enthusiasm, Savonarola succumbed. He was imprisoned, tortured, and burned upon the public square in 1498.

What Savonarola really achieved for Florence was not a permanent reform of morality, but a resuscitation of the spirit of freedom. His followers, called in contempt *I Piagnoni*, or the Weepers, formed the pith of the commonwealth in future ; and the memory of their martyr served as a common bond of sympathy to unite them in times of trial. It was a necessary consequence of the peculiar part he played that the city was henceforth divided into factions representing mutually antagonistic principles. These factions were not created by Savonarola ; but his extraordinary influence accentuated, as it were, the humours that lay dormant in the State. Families favourable to the Medici took the name of *Palleschi*. Men who chased against puritanical reform, and who were eager for any government that should secure them their old licence, were known as *Compagnacci*. Meanwhile the oligarchs, who disliked a democratic Constitution, and thought it possible to found an aristocracy without the intervention of the Medici, came to be known as *Gli Ottimati*. Florence held within itself, from this epoch forward to the final extinction of liberty, four great parties : the

Piagnoni, passionate for political freedom and austerity of life ; the *Palleschi*, favourable to the Medicean cause, and regretful of Lorenzo's pleasant rule ; the *Compagnacci*, intolerant of the reformed republic, neither hostile nor loyal to the Medici, but desirous of personal licence ; the *Ottimati*, astute and selfish, watching their own advantage, ever-mindful to form a narrow government of privileged families, disinclined to the Medici, except when they thought the Medici might be employed as instruments in their intrigues.

XX.

During the short period of Savonarola's ascendancy, Florence was in form at least a Theocracy, without any titular head but Christ ; and as long as the enthusiasm inspired by the monk lasted, as long as his personal influence endured, the Constitution of the Grand Council worked well. After his death it was found that the machinery was too cumbrous. While adopting the Venetian form of government, the Florentines had omitted one essential element—the Doge. By referring measures of immediate necessity to the Grand Council, the republic lost precious time. Dangerous publicity, moreover, was incurred ; and so large a body often came to no firm resolution. There was no permanent authority in the State ; no security that what had been deliberated would be carried out with energy ; no titular chief, who could transact affairs with foreign potentates and their ambassadors. Accordingly, in 1502, it was decreed that the Gonfalonier should hold office for life—should be in fact a Doge. To this important post of permanent president Piero Soderini was appointed ; and in his hands were placed the chief affairs of the republic.

At this point Florence, after all her vicissitudes, had won her way to something really similar to the Venetian Constitu-

tion. Yet the similarity existed more in form than in fact. The government of burghers in a Grand Council, with a Senate of forty, and a Gonfalonier for life, had not grown up gradually and absorbed into itself the vital forces of the commonwealth. It was a creation of inventive intelligence, not of national development, in Florence. It had against it the jealousy of the Ottimati, who felt themselves overshadowed by the Gonfalonier ; the hatred of the Palleschi, who yearned for the Medici ; the discontent of the working-classes, who thought the presence of a Court in Florence would improve trade ; last, but not least, the disaffection of the Compagnacci, who felt they could not flourish to their heart's content in a free commonwealth. Moreover, though the name of liberty was on every lip, though the Florentines talked, wrote, and speculated more about constitutional independence than they had ever done, the true energy of free institutions had passed from the city. The corrupt government of Cosimo and Lorenzo bore its natural fruit now. Egotistic ambition and avarice supplanted patriotism and industry. It is necessary to comprehend these circumstances, in order that the next revolution may be clearly understood.

XXI.

During the ten years which elapsed between 1502 and 1512, Piero Soderini administered Florence with an outward show of great prosperity. He regained Pisa, and maintained an honourable foreign policy in the midst of the wars stirred up by the League of Cambray. Meanwhile the young princes of the house of Medici had grown to manhood in exile. The Cardinal Giovanni was thirty-seven in 1512. His brother Giuliano was thirty-three. Both of these men were better fitted than their brother Piero to fight the battles of the family. Giovanni, in particular, had inherited no small portion of the

Medicean craft. During the troubled reign of Julius II. he kept very quiet, cementing his connections with powerful men in Rome, but making no effort to regain his hold on Florence. Now the moment for striking a decisive blow had come. After the battle of Ravenna in 1512, the French were driven out of Italy, and the Sforzas returned to Milan ; the Spanish troops, under the Viceroy Cardona, remained masters of the country. Following the camp of these Spaniards, Giovanni de' Medici entered Tuscany in August, and caused the restoration of the Medici to be announced in Florence. The people, assembled by Soderini, resolved to resist to the uttermost. No foreign army should force them to receive the masters whom they had expelled. Yet their courage failed on August 29th, when news reached them of the capture and the sack of Prato. Prato is a sunny little city a few miles distant from the walls of Florence, famous for the beauty of its women, the richness of its gardens, and the grace of its buildings. Into this gem of cities the savage soldiery of Spain marched in the bright autumnal weather, and turned the paradise into a hell. It is even now impossible to read of what they did in Prato without shuddering.¹ Cruelty and lust, sordid greed for gold, and cold delight in bloodshed, could go no further. Giovanni de' Medici, by nature mild and voluptuous, averse to violence of all kinds, had to smile approval, while the Spanish Viceroy knocked thus with mailed hand for him at the door of Florence. The Florentines were paralysed with terror. They deposed Soderini and received the Medici. Giovanni and Giuliano entered their devastated palace in the Via Larga, abolished the Grand Council, and dealt with the republic as they listed.

¹ See *Archivio Storico*.

XXII.

There was no longer any medium in Florence possible between either tyranny or some such government as the Medici had now destroyed. The State was too rotten to recover even the modified despotism of Lorenzo's days. Each transformation had impaired some portion of its framework, broken down some of its traditions, and sowed new seeds of egotism in citizens who saw all things round them change but self-advantage. Therefore Giovanni and Giuliano felt themselves secure in flattering the popular vanity by an empty parade of the old institutions. They restored the Signory and the Gonfalonier, elected for intervals of two months by officers appointed for this purpose by the Medici. Florence had the show of a free government. But the Medici managed all things ; and soldiers, commanded by their creature, Paolo Vettori, held the Palace and the Public Square. The tyranny thus established was less secure, inasmuch as it openly rested upon violence, than Lorenzo's power had been ; nor were there signs wanting that the burghers could ill brook their servitude. The conspiracy of Pietro Paolo Boscoli and Agostino Capponi proved that the Medicean brothers ran daily risk of life. Indeed, it is not likely that they would have succeeded in maintaining their authority—for they were poor and ill-supported by friends outside the city—except for one most lucky circumstance : that was the election of Giovanni de' Medici to the Papacy in 1513.

The creation of Leo X. spread satisfaction throughout Italy. Politicians trusted that he would display some portion of his father's ability, and restore peace to the nation. Men of arts and letters expected everything from a Medicean Pope, who had already acquired the reputation of polite culture and open-handed generosity. They at any rate were not deceived.

Leo's first words on taking his place in the Vatican were addressed to his brother Giulano : ' Let us enjoy the Papacy, now that God has given it to us ; ' and his notion of enjoyment was to surround himself with court-poets, jesters, and musicians, to adorn his Roman palaces with frescoes, to collect statues and inscriptions, to listen to Latin speeches, and to pass judgment upon scholarly compositions. Any one and every one who gave him sensual or intellectual pleasure, found his purse always open. He lived in the utmost magnificence, and made Rome the Paris of the Renaissance for brilliance, immorality, and self-indulgent ease. The politicians had less reason to be satisfied. Instead of uniting the Italians and keeping the great powers of Europe in check, Leo carried on a series of disastrous petty wars, chiefly with the purpose of establishing the Medici as princes. He squandered the revenues of the Church, and left enormous debts behind him—an exchequer ruined and a foreign policy so confused that peace for Italy could only be obtained by servitude.

Florence shared in the general rejoicing which greeted Leo's accession to the Papacy. He was the first Florentine citizen who had received the tiara, and the popular vanity was flattered by this honour to the Republic. Political theorists, meanwhile, began to speculate what greatness Florence, in combination with Rome, might rise to. The Pope was young ; he ruled a large territory, reduced to order by his warlike predecessors. It seemed as though the Republic, swayed by him, might make herself the first city in Italy, and restore the glories of her Guelf ascendancy upon the platform of Renaissance statecraft. There was now no overt opposition to the Medici in Florence. How to govern the city from Rome, and how to advance the fortunes of his brother Giulano and his nephew Lorenzo (Piero's son, a young man of twenty-one), occupied the Pope's most serious attention. For Lorenzo Leo obtained the Duchy of Urbino and the hand of a French princess. Giulano was

named Gonfalonier of the Church. He also received the French title of Duke of Nemours and the hand of Filiberta, Princess of Savoy. Leo entertained a further project of acquiring the crown of Southern Italy for his brother, and thus of uniting Rome, Florence, and Naples under the headship of his house. Nor were the Medicean interests neglected in the Church. Giulio, the Pope's bastard cousin, was made cardinal. He remained in Rome, acting as vice-chancellor and doing the hard work of the Papal Government for the pleasure-loving pontiff.

To Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino, the titular head of the family, was committed the government of Florence. During their exile, wandering from court to court in Italy, the Medici had forgotten what it was to be burghers, and had acquired the manners of princes. Leo alone retained enough of caution to warn his nephew that the Florentines must still be treated as free people. He confirmed the constitution of the Signory and the Privy Council of seventy established by his father, bidding Lorenzo, while he ruled this sham republic, to avoid the outer signs of tyranny. The young duke at first behaved with moderation, but he could not cast aside his habits of a great lord. Florence now for the first time saw a regular court established in her midst, with a prince, who, though he bore a foreign title, was in fact her master. The joyous days of Lorenzo the Magnificent returned. Masquerades and triumphs filled the public squares. Two clubs of pleasure, called the Diamond and the Branch—badges adopted by the Medici to signify their firmness in disaster and their power of self-recovery—were formed to lead the revels. The best sculptors and painters devoted their genius to the invention of costumes and cars. The city affected to believe that the age of gold had come again.

XXIII.

Fortune had been very favourable to the Medici. They had returned as princes to Florence. Giovanni was Pope. Giuliano was Gonfalonier of the Church. Giulio was Cardinal and Archbishop of Florence. Lorenzo ruled the city like a sovereign. But this prosperity was no less brief than it was brilliant. A few years sufficed to sweep off all the chiefs of the great house. Giuliano died in 1516, leaving only a bastard son Ippolito. Lorenzo died in 1519, leaving a bastard son Alessandro, and a daughter, six days old, who lived to be the Queen of France. Leo died in 1521. There remained now no legitimate male descendants from the stock of Cosimo. The honours and pretensions of the Medici devolved upon three bastards—on the Cardinal Giulio, and the two boys, Alessandro and Ippolito. Of these, Alessandro was a mulatto, his mother having been a Moorish slave in the Palace of Urbino ; and whether his father was Giulio, or Giuliano, or a base groom, was not known for certain. To such extremities were the Medici reduced. In order to keep their house alive, they were obliged to adopt this foundling. It is true that the younger branch of the family, descended from Lorenzo, the brother of Cosimo, still flourished. At this epoch it was represented by Giovanni, the great general known as the Invincible, whose bust so strikingly resembles that of Napoleon. But between this line of the Medici and the elder branch there had never been true cordiality. The Cardinal mistrusted Giovanni. It may, moreover, be added, that Giovanni was himself doomed to death in the year 1526.

Giulio de' Medici was left in 1521 to administer the State of Florence single-handed. He was archbishop, and he resided in the city, holding it with the grasp of an absolute ruler. Yet he felt his position insecure. The republic had no longer any

forms of self government ; nor was there a magistracy to whom the despot could delegate his power in his absence. Giulio's ambition was fixed upon the Papal crown. The bastards he was rearing were but children. Florence had, therefore, to be furnished with some political machinery that should work of itself. The Cardinal did not wish to give freedom to the city, but clockwork. He was in the perilous situation of having to rule a commonwealth without life, without elasticity, without capacity of self-movement, yet full of such material as, left alone, might ferment, and breed a revolution. In this perplexity, he had recourse to advisers. The most experienced politicians, philosophical theorists, practical diplomatists, and students of antique history were requested to furnish him with plans for a new constitution, just as you ask an architect to give you the plan of a new house. This was the field-day of the doctrinaires. Now was seen how much political sagacity the Florentines had gained while they were losing liberty. We possess these several drafts of constitutions. Some recommend tyranny ; some incline to aristocracy, or what Italians called *Governo Stretto* ; some to democracy, or *Governo Largo* ; some to an eclectic compound of the other forms, or *Governo Misto*. More consummate masterpieces of constructive ingenuity can hardly be imagined. What is omitted in all, is just what no doctrinaire, no nostrum can communicate—the breath of life, the principle of organic growth. Things had come, indeed, to a melancholy pass for Florence when her tyrant, in order to confirm his hold upon her, had to devise these springs and irons to support her tottering limbs.

XXIV.

While the Archbishop and the doctors were debating, a plot was hatching in the Rucellai Gardens. It was here that the Florentine Academy now held their meetings. For this society

Machiavelli wrote his 'Treatise on the Art of War,' and his 'Discourses upon Livy.' The former was an exposition of Machiavelli's scheme for creating a national militia, as the only safeguard for Italy, exposed at this period to the invasions of great foreign armies. The latter is one of the three or four masterpieces produced by the Florentine school of critical historians. Stimulated by the daring speculations of Machiavelli, and fired to enthusiasm by their study of antiquity, the younger academicians formed a conspiracy for murdering Giulio de' Medici, and restoring the republic on a Roman model. An intercepted letter betrayed their plans. Two of the conspirators were taken and beheaded. Others escaped. But the discovery of this conjuration put a stop to Giulio's scheme of reforming the State. Henceforth he ruled Florence like a despot, mild in manners, cautious in the exercise of arbitrary power, but firm in his autocracy. The Condottiere, Alessandro Vitelli, with a company of soldiers, was taken into service for the protection of his person and the intimidation of the citizens.

In 1523, the Pope, Adrian VI., expired after a short papacy, from which he gained no honour and Italy no profit. Giulio hurried to Rome, and, by the clever use of his large influence, caused himself to be elected with the title of Clement VII. In Florence he left Silvio Passerini, Cardinal of Cortona, as his vicegerent and the guardian of the two boys Alessandro and Ippolito. The discipline of many years had accustomed the Florentines to a government of priests. Still the burghers, mindful of their ancient liberties, were galled by the yoke of a Cortonese, sprung up from one of their subject cities ; nor could they bear the bastards who were being reared to rule them. Foreigners threw it in their teeth that Florence, the city glorious of art and freedom, was become a stable for mules — *stalla da muli*, in the expressive language of popular sarcasm. Bastardy, it may be said in passing, carried with it small dis-

honour among the Italians. The Estensi were all illegitimate ; the Aragonese house in Naples sprang from Alfonso's natural son ; and children of Popes ranked among the princes. Yet the uncertainty of Alessandro's birth and the base condition of his mother made the prospect of this tyrant peculiarly odious ; while the primacy of a foreign cardinal in the midst of citizens whose spirit was still unbroken, embittered the cup of humiliation. The Casa Medici held its authority by a slender thread, and depended more upon the disunion of the burghers than on any power of its own. It could always reckon on the favour of the lower populace, who gained profit and amusement from the presence of a court. The Ottimati again hoped more from a weak despotism than from a commonwealth, where their privileges would have been merged in the mass of the Grand Council. Thus the sympathies of the plebeians and the selfishness of the rich patricians prevented the republic from asserting itself. On this meagre basis of personal cupidity the Medici sustained themselves. What made the situation still more delicate, and at the same time protracted the feeble rule of Clement, was that neither the Florentines nor the Medici had any army. Face to face with a potentate so considerable as the Pope, a free State could not be established without military force. On the other hand, the Medici, supported by a mere handful of mercenaries, had no power to resist a popular rising if any external event should inspire the middle classes with a hope of liberty.

XXV.

Clement assumed the tiara at a moment of great difficulty. Leo had ruined the finance of Rome. France and Spain were still contending for the possession of Italy. While acting as Vice-Chancellor, Giulio de' Medici had seemed to hold the reins with a firm grasp, and men expected that he would

prove a powerful Pope ; but in those days he had Leo to help him ; and Leo, though indolent, was an abler man than his cousin. He planned, and Giulio executed. Obliged to act now for himself, Clement revealed the weakness of his nature. That weakness was irresolution, craft without wisdom, diplomacy without knowledge of men. He raised the storm, and showed himself incapable of guiding it. This is not the place to tell by what a series of crooked schemes and cross purposes he brought upon himself the ruin of the Church and Rome, to relate his disagreement with the Emperor, or to describe again the sack of the Eternal City by the rabble of the Constable de Bourbon's army. That wreck of Rome in 1527 was the closing scene of the Italian Renaissance—the last of the Apocalyptic tragedies foretold by Savonarola — the death of the old age.

When the Florentines knew what was happening in Rome, they rose and forced the Cardinal Passerini to depart with the Medicean bastards from the city. The youth demanded arms for the defence of the town, and they received them. The whole male population was enrolled in a militia. The Grand Council was reformed, and the republic was restored upon the basis of 1495. Niccolo Capponi was elected Gonfalonier. The name of Christ was again registered as chief of the commonwealth—to such an extent did the memory of Savonarola still sway the popular imagination. The new State hastened to form an alliance with France, and Malatesta Baglioni was chosen as military Commander-in-Chief. Meanwhile the city armed itself for siege—Michel Angelo Buonarroti and Francesco da San Gallo undertaking the construction of new forts and ramparts. These measures were adopted with sudden decision, because it was soon known that Clement had made peace with the Emperor, and that the army which had sacked Rome was going to be marched on Florence.

XXVI.

In the month of August 1529, the Prince of Orange assembled his forces at Terni, and thence advanced by easy stages into Tuscany. As he approached, the Florentines laid waste their suburbs, and threw down their wreath of towers, in order that the enemy might have no harbourage or points of vantage for attack. Their troops were concentrated within the city, where a new Gonfalonier, Francesco Carducci, furiously opposed to the Medici, and attached to the Piagnoni party, now ruled. On September 4, the Prince of Orange appeared before the walls, and opened the memorable siege. It lasted eight months, at the end of which time, betrayed by their generals, divided among themselves, and worn out with delays, the Florentines capitulated. Florence was paid as compensation for the insult offered to the pontiff in the sack of Rome.

The long yoke of the Medici had undermined the character of the Florentines. This, their last glorious struggle for liberty, was but a flash in the pan—a final flare up of the dying lamp. The city was not satisfied with slavery; but it had no capacity for united action. The Ottimati were egotistic and jealous of the people. The Palleschi desired to restore the Medici at any price—some of them frankly wishing for a principality, others trusting that the old quasi-republican government might still be reinstated. The Red Republicans, styled Libertini and Arrabbiati, clung together in blind hatred of the Medicean party; but they had no further policy to guide them. The Piagnoni, or Frateschi, stuck to the memory of Savonarola, and believed that angels would descend to guard the battlements when human help had failed. These enthusiasts still formed the true nerve of the nation—the class that might have saved the State, if salvation had been possible. Even as it was, the energy of their fanaticism prolonged the

siege until resistance seemed no longer physically possible. The hero developed by the crisis was Francesco Ferrucci, a plebeian who had passed his youth in manual labour, and who now displayed rare military genius. He fell fighting outside the walls of Florence. Had he commanded the troops from the beginning, and remained inside the city, it is just possible that the fate of the war might have been less disastrous. As it was, Malatesta Baglioni, the Commander-in-Chief, turned out an arrant scoundrel. He held secret correspondence with Clement and the Prince of Orange. It was he who finally sold Florence to her foes, ‘putting on his head,’ as the Doge of Venice said before the Senate, ‘the cap of the biggest traitor upon record.’

XXVII.

What remains of Florentine history may be briefly told. Clement, now the undisputed arbiter of power and honour in the city, chose Alessandro de' Medici to be prince. Alessandro was created Duke of Civitâ di Penna, and married to a natural daughter of Charles V. Ippolito was made a cardinal. Ippolito would have preferred a secular to a priestly kingdom ; nor did he conceal his jealousy for his cousin. Therefore Alessandro had him poisoned. Alessandro in his turn was murdered by his kinsman, Lorenzino de' Medici. Lorenzino paid the usual penalty of tyrannicide some years later. When Alessandro was killed in 1539, Clement had himself been dead five years. Thus the whole posterity of Cosimo de' Medici, with the exception of Catherine, Queen of France, was utterly extinguished. But the Medici had struck root so firmly in the State, and had so remodelled it upon the type of tyranny, that the Florentines were no longer able to do without them. The chiefs of the Ottimati selected Cosimo, the representative of Giovanni the Invincible, for their prince, and thus the line of the elder Lorenzo came at last to

power. This Cosimo was a boy of eighteen, fond of field-sports, and unused to party intrigues. When Francesco Guicciardini offered him a privy purse of one hundred and twenty thousand ducats annually, together with the presidency of Florence, this wily politician hoped that he would rule the State through Cosimo, and realise at last that dream of the Ottimati, a *Governo Stretto or di Pochi*. He was notably mistaken in his calculations. The first days of Cosimo's administration showed that he possessed the craft of his family and the vigour of his immediate progenitors, and that he meant to be sole master in Florence. He it was who obtained the title of Grand Duke of Tuscany from the Pope—a title confirmed by the Emperor, fortified by Austrian alliances, and transmitted through his heirs to the present century.

XXVIII.

In this sketch of Florentine history, I have purposely omitted all details that did not bear upon the constitutional history of the republic, or on the growth of the Medici as despots ; because I wanted to present a picture of the process whereby that family contrived to fasten itself upon the freest and most cultivated State in Italy. This success the Medici owed mainly to their own obstinacy, and to the weakness of republican institutions in Florence. Their power was founded upon wealth in the first instance, and upon the ingenuity with which they turned the favour of the proletariat to use. It was confirmed by the mistakes and failures of their enemies, by Rinaldo degli Albizzi's attack on Cosimo, by the conspiracy of Neroni and Pitti against Piero, and by Francesco de' Pazzi's attempt to assassinate Lorenzo. It was still further strengthened by the Medicean sympathy for arts and letters—a sympathy which placed both Cosimo and Lorenzo at the head of the

Renaissance movement, and made them worthy to represent Florence, the city of genius, in the fifteenth century. While thus founding and cementing their dynastic influence upon the basis of a wide-spread popularity, the Medici employed persistent cunning in the enfeeblement of the Republic. It was their policy not to plant themselves by force or acts of overt tyranny, but to corrupt ambitious citizens, to secure the patronage of public officers, and to render the spontaneous working of the State machinery impossible. By pursuing this policy over a long series of years they made the revival of liberty in 1494, and again in 1527, ineffectual. While exiled from Florence, they never lost the hope of returning as masters, so long as the passions they had excited, and they alone could gratify, remained in full activity. These passions were avarice and egotism, the greed of the grasping Ottimati, the jealousy of the nobles, the self-indulgence of the proletariat. Yet it is probable they might have failed to recover Florence, on one or other of these two occasions, but for the accident which placed Giovanni de' Medici on the Papal chair, and enabled him to put Giulio in the way of the same dignity. From the accession of Leo in 1513 to the year 1527 the Medici ruled Florence from Rome, and brought the power of the Church into the service of their despotism. After that date they were still further aided by the imperial policy of Charles V., who chose to govern Italy through subject princes, bound to himself by domestic alliances and powerful interests. One of these was Cosimo, the first Grand Duke of Tuscany.

*THE DEBT OF ENGLISH TO ITALIAN
LITERATURE.*

To an Englishman one of the chief interests of the study of Italian literature is derived from the fact that, between England and Italy, an almost uninterrupted current of intellectual intercourse has been maintained throughout the last five centuries. The English have never, indeed, at any time been slavish imitators of the Italians ; but Italy has formed the dream-land of the English fancy, inspiring poets with their most delightful thoughts, supplying them with subjects, and implanting in their minds that sentiment of Southern beauty which, engrafted on our more passionately imaginative Northern nature, has borne rich fruit in the works of Chaucer, Spenser, Marlowe, Shakspere, Milton, and the poets of this century.

It is not strange that Italy should thus in matters of culture have been the guide and mistress of England. Italy, of all the European nations, was the first to produce high art and literature in the dawn of modern civilisation. Italy was the first to display refinement in domestic life, polish of manners, civilities of intercourse. In Italy the commerce of courts first developed a society of men and women, educated by the same traditions of humanistic culture. In Italy the principles of government were first discussed and reduced to theory. In Italy the zeal for the classics took its origin ; and scholarship, to which we owe our mental training, was at first the possession of none almost but Italians. It therefore followed that during

the age of the Renaissance any man of taste or genius, who desired to share the newly discovered privileges of learning, had to seek Italy. Every one who wished to be initiated into the secrets of science or philosophy, had to converse with Italians in person or through books. Every one who was eager to polish his native language, and to render it the proper vehicle of poetic thought, had to consult the masterpieces of Italian literature. To Italians the courtier, the diplomatist, the artist, the student of statecraft and of military tactics, the political theorist, the merchant, the man of laws, the man of arms, and the churchman turned for precedents and precepts. The nations of the North, still torpid and somnolent in their semi-barbarism, needed the magnetic touch of Italy before they could awake to intellectual life. Nor was this all. Long before the thirst for culture possessed the English mind, Italy had appropriated and assimilated all that Latin literature contained of strong or splendid to arouse the thought and fancy of the modern world ; Greek, too, was rapidly becoming the possession of the scholars of Florence and Rome ; so that English men of letters found the spirit of the ancients infused into a modern literature ; models of correct and elegant composition existed for them in a language easy, harmonious, and not dissimilar in usage to their own.

The importance of this service, rendered by Italians to the rest of Europe, cannot be exaggerated. By exploring, digesting, and reproducing the classics, Italy made the labour of scholarship comparatively light for the Northern nations, and extended to us the privilege of culture without the peril of losing originality in the enthusiasm for erudition. Our great poets could handle lightly, and yet profitably, those masterpieces of Greece and Rome, beneath the weight of which, when first discovered, the genius of the Italians had wavered. To the originality of Shakspere an accession of wealth without weakness was brought by the perusal of Italian works, in which

the spirit of the antique was seen as in a modern mirror. Then, in addition to this benefit of instruction, Italy gave to England a gift of pure beauty, the influence of which, in refining our national taste, harmonising the roughness of our manners and our language, and stimulating our imagination, has been incalculable. It was a not unfrequent custom for young men of ability to study at the Italian universities, or at least to undertake a journey to the principal Italian cities. From their sojourn in that land of loveliness and intellectual life they returned with their Northern brains most powerfully stimulated. To produce, by masterpieces of the imagination, some work of style that should remain as a memento of that glorious country, and should vie on English soil with the art of Italy, was their generous ambition. Consequently the substance of the stories versified by our poets, the forms of our metres, and the cadences of our prose periods reveal a close attention to Italian originals.

This debt of England to Italy in the matter of our literature began with Chaucer. Truly original and national as was the framework of the 'Canterbury Tales,' we can hardly doubt but that Chaucer was determined in the form adopted for his poem by the example of Boccaccio. The subject-matter, also, of many of his tales was taken from Boccaccio's prose or verse. For example, the story of Patient Grizzel is founded upon one of the legends of the 'Decameron,' while the Knight's Tale is almost translated from the 'Teseide' of Boccaccio, and Troilus and Creseide is derived from the 'Filostrato' of the same author. The Franklin's Tale and the Reeve's Tale are also based either on stories of Boccaccio or else on French 'Fabliaux,' to which Chaucer, as well as Boccaccio, had access. I do not wish to lay too much stress upon Chaucer's direct obligations to Boccaccio, because it is incontestable that the French 'Fabliaux,' which supplied them both with subjects, were the common property of the mediæval nations. But his

indirect debt in all that concerns elegant handling of material, and in the fusion of the romantic with the classic spirit, which forms the chief charm of such tales as the Palamon and Arcite, can hardly be exaggerated. Lastly, the seven-lined stanza, called *rime royal*, which Chaucer used with so much effect in narrative poetry, was probably borrowed from the earlier Florentine 'Ballata,' the last line rhyming with its predecessor being substituted for the recurrent refrain. Indeed, the stanza itself, as used by our earliest poets, may be found in Guido Cavalcanti's 'Ballatetta,' beginning, *Posso degli occhi miei.*

Between Chaucer and Surrey the Muse of England fell asleep ; but when in the latter half of the reign of Henry VIII. she awoke again, it was as a conscious pupil of the Italian that she attempted new strains and essayed fresh metres. 'In the latter end of Henry VIII.'s reign,' says Puttenham, 'sprang up a new company of courtly makers, of whom Sir T. Wyatt the elder, and Henry Earl of Surrey, were the two chieftains, who, having travelled into Italy, and there tasted the sweet and stately measures and style of the Italian poesy, as novices newly crept out of the schools of Dante, Ariosto, and Petrarch, they greatly polished our rude and homely manner of vulgar poesy, from that it had been before, and for that cause may justly be said the first reformers of our English metre and style.' The chief point in which Surrey imitated his 'master, Francis Petrarcha,' was in the use of the sonnet. He introduced this elaborate form of poetry into our literature ; and how it has thriven with us, the masterpieces of Spenser, Shakspere, Milton, Wordsworth, Keats, Rossetti attest. As practised by Dante and Petrarch, the sonnet is a poem of fourteen lines, divided into two quatrains and two triplets, so arranged that the two quatrains repeat one pair of rhymes, while the two triplets repeat another pair. Thus an Italian sonnet of the strictest form is composed upon four rhymes, interlaced with great art. But much divergence from this rigid scheme of rhyming was admitted even by

Petrarch, who not unfrequently divided the six final lines of the sonnet into three couplets, interwoven in such a way that the two last lines never rhymed.¹

It has been necessary to say thus much about the structure of the Italian sonnet, in order to make clear the task which lay before Surrey and Wyatt, when they sought to transplant it into English. Surrey did not adhere to the strict fashion of Petrarch : his sonnets consist either of three regular quatrains concluded with a couplet, or else of twelve lines rhyming alternately and concluded with a couplet. Wyatt attempted to follow the order and interlacement of the Italian rhymes more closely, but he too concluded his sonnet with a couplet. This introduction of the final couplet was a violation of the Italian rule, which may be fairly considered as prejudicial to the harmony of the whole structure, and which has insensibly caused the English sonnet to terminate in an epigram. The famous sonnet of Surrey on his love, Geraldine, is an excellent example of the metrical structure as adapted to the supposed necessities of English rhyming, and as afterwards adhered to by Shakspere in his long series of love-poems. Surrey, while adopting the form of the sonnet, kept quite clear of the Petrarchist's mannerism. His language is simple and direct : there is no subtilising upon far-fetched conceits, no wire-drawing of exquisite sentimentalism, although he celebrates in this, as in his other sonnets, a lady for whom he appears to have entertained no more than a Platonic or imaginary passion.] Surrey was a great experimentalist in metre. Besides the sonnet, he introduced into England blank verse, which he borrowed from the Italian *versi sciolti*, fixing that decasyllable iambic rhythm for English versification in which our greatest poetical triumphs have been achieved.²

¹ The order of rhymes runs thus : *a, b, b, a, a, b, b, a, c, d, c, d, c, d* ; or in the terzets, *c, d, e, c, d, c*, or *c, d, e, d, c, e*, and so forth.

² See Appendix on Blank Verse.

Before quitting the subject of the sonnet it would, however, be well to mention the changes which were wrought in its structure by early poets desirous of emulating the Italians. Shakspere, as already hinted, adhered to the simple form introduced by Surrey : his stanzas invariably consist of three separate quatrains followed by a couplet. But Sir Philip Sidney, whose familiarity with Italian literature was intimate, and who had resided long in Italy, perceived that without a greater complexity and interweaving of rhymes the beauty of the poem was considerably impaired. He therefore combined the rhymes of the two quatrains, as the Italians had done, leaving himself free to follow the Italian fashion in the conclusion, or else to wind up after English usage with a couplet. Spenser and Drummond follow the rule of Sidney ; Drayton and Daniel, that of Surrey and Shakspere. It was not until Milton that an English poet preserved the form of the Italian sonnet in its strictness ; but, after Milton, the greatest sonnet-writers—Wordsworth, Keats, and Rossetti—have aimed at producing stanzas as regular as those of Petrarch.

The great age of our literature—the age of Elizabeth—was essentially one of Italian influence. In Italy the Renaissance had reached its height : England, feeling the new life which had been infused into arts and letters, turned instinctively to Italy, and adopted her canons of taste. ‘Euphues’ has a distinct connection with the Italian discourses of polite culture. Sidney’s ‘Arcadia’ is a copy of what Boccaccio had attempted in his classical romances, and Sanazzaro in his pastorals.¹ Spenser approached the subject of the ‘Faery Queen’ with his

¹ It has extraordinary interest for the student of our literary development, inasmuch as it is full of experiments in metres, which have never thriven on English soil. Not to mention the attempt to write in asclepiads and other classical rhythms, we might point to Sidney’s *terza rima* poems with *sdruciollo* or treble rhymes. This peculiar and painful form he borrowed from Ariosto and Sanazzaro ; but even in Italian it cannot be handled without sacrifice of variety, without impeding the metrical movement and marring the sense.

head full of Ariosto and the romantic poets of Italy. His sonnets are Italian ; his odes embody the Platonic philosophy of the Italians.¹ The extent of Spenser's deference to the Italians in matters of poetic art may be gathered from this passage in the dedication to Sir Walter Raleigh of the 'Faery Queen :'

I have followed all the antique poets historical : first Homer, who in the persons of Agamemnon and Ulysses hath ensampled a good governor and a virtuous man, the one in his Ilias, the other in his Odysseis ; then Virgil, whose like intention was to do in the person of *Aeneas* ; after him Ariosto comprised them both in his Orlando ; and lately Tasso dissevered them again, and formed both parts in two persons, namely, that part which they in Philosophy call Ethice, or virtues of a private man, coloured in his Rinaldo, the other named Politice in his Goffredo.

From this it is clear that, to the mind of Spenser, both Ariosto and Tasso were authorities of hardly less gravity than Homer and Virgil. Raleigh, in the splendid sonnet with which he responds to this dedication, enhances the fame of Spenser by affecting to believe that the great Italian, Petrarch, will be jealous of him in the grave. To such an extent were the thoughts of the English poets occupied with their Italian masters in the art of song.

It was at this time, again, that English literature was enriched by translations of Ariosto and Tasso—the one from the pen of Sir John Harrington, the other from that of Fairfax. Both were produced in the metre of the original—the octave stanza, which, however, did not at that period take root in England. At the same period the works of many of the Italian novelists, especially Bandello and Cinthio and Boccaccio, were translated into English ; Painter's ' Palace of Pleasure ' being a treasure-house of Italian works of fiction. Thomas Hoby translated Castiglione's ' Courtier ' in 1561. As a proof of the

¹ The stately structure of the ' Prothalamion ' and ' Epithalamion ' is a rebuilding of the Italian Canzone. His Eclogues, with their allegories, repeat the manner of Petrarch's minor Latin poems.

extent to which Italian books were read in England at the end of the sixteenth century, we may take a stray sentence from a letter of Harvey, in which he disparages the works of Robert Greene :—‘ Even Guicciardine’s silver histories and Ariosto’s golden cantos grow out of request : and the Countess of Pembroke’s “ Arcadia ” is not green enough for queasy stomachs ; but they must have seen Greene’s “ Arcadia,” and I believe most eagerly longed for Greene’s “ Faery Queen.” ’

Still more may be gathered on the same topic from the indignant protest uttered by Roger Ascham in his ‘ Schoolmaster ’ (pp. 78–91, date 1570) against the prevalence of Italian customs, the habit of Italian travel, and the reading of Italian books translated into English. Selections of Italian stories rendered into English were extremely popular ; and Greene’s tales, which had such vogue that Nash says of them, ‘ glad was that printer that might be so blest to pay him dear for the very dregs of his wit,’ were all modelled on the Italian. The education of a young man of good family was not thought complete unless he had spent some time in Italy, studied its literature, admired its arts, and caught at least some tincture of its manners. Our rude ancestors brought back with them from these journeys many Southern vices, together with the culture they had gone to seek. The contrast between the plain dealing of the North and the refined Machiavellism of the South, between Protestant earnestness in religion and Popish scepticism, between the homely virtues of England and the courtly libertinism of Venice or Florence, blunted the moral sense, while it stimulated the intellectual activity of the English travellers, and too often communicated a fatal shock to their principles. *Inglese Italianato è un diavolo incarnato* passed into a proverb : we find it on the lips of Parker, of Howell, of Sidney, of Greene, and of Ascham ; while Italy itself was styled by severe moralists the court of Circe. In James Howell’s ‘ Instructions for forreine travell ’ we find this pregnant

sentence : ‘And being now in Italy, that great limbique of working braines, he must be very circumspect in his carriage, for she is able to turne a Saint into a devill, and deprave the best natures, if one will abandon himselfe, and become a prey to dissolut courses and wantonesse.’ Italy, in truth, had already become corrupt, and the fruit of her contact with the nations of the North was seen in the lives of such scholars as Robert Greene, who confessed that he returned from his travels instructed ‘in all the villanies under the sun.’ Many of the scandals of the court of James might be ascribed to this aping of Southern manners.

Yet, together with the evil of depraved morality, the advantage of improved culture was imported from Italy into England ; and the constitution of the English genius was young and healthy enough to purge off the mischief, while it assimilated what was beneficial. This is very manifest in the history of our drama, which, taking it altogether, is at the same time the purest and the most varied that exists in literature ; while it may be affirmed without exaggeration that one of the main impulses to free dramatic composition in England was communicated by the attraction everything Italian possessed for the English fancy. It was in the drama that the English displayed the richness and the splendour of the Renaissance, which had blazed so gorgeously and at times so balefully below the Alps. The Italy of the Renaissance fascinated our dramatists with a strange wild glamour—the contrast of external pageant and internal tragedy, the alternations of radiance and gloom, the terrible examples of bloodshed, treason, and heroism emergent from ghastly crimes. Our drama began with a translation of Ariosto’s ‘*Suppositi*’ and ended with Davenant’s ‘*Just Italian*.’ In the very dawn of tragic composition Greene versified a portion of the ‘*Orlando Furioso*,’ and Marlowe devoted one of his most brilliant studies to the villanies of a Maltese Jew. Of Shakspere’s plays five are incontestably

Italian : several of the rest are furnished with Italian names to suit the popular taste. Ben Jonson laid the scene of his most subtle comedy of manners, ‘Volpone,’ in Venice, and sketched the first cast of ‘Every Man in his Humour’ for Italian characters. Tourneur, Ford, and Webster were so dazzled by the tragic lustre of the wickedness of Italy that their finest dramas, without exception, are minute and carefully studied psychological analyses of great Italian tales of crime. The same, in a less degree, is true of Middleton and Dekker. Massinger makes a story of the Sforza family the subject of one of his best plays. Beaumont and Fletcher draw the subjects of comedies and tragedies alike from the Italian novelists. Fletcher in his ‘Faithful Shepherdess’ transfers the pastoral style of Tasso and Guarini to the North. So close is the connection between our tragedy and Italian novels that Marston and Ford think fit to introduce passages of Italian dialogue into the plays of ‘Giovanni and Annabella’ and ‘Antonio and Mellida.’ But the best proof of the extent to which Italian life and literature had influenced our dramatists, may be easily obtained by taking down Halliwell’s ‘Dictionary of Old Plays,’ and noticing that about every third drama has an Italian title. Meanwhile the poems composed by the chief dramatists—Shakspere’s ‘Venus and Adonis,’ Marlowe’s ‘Hero and Leander,’ Marston’s ‘Pygmalion,’ and Beaumont’s ‘Hermaphrodite’—are all of them conceived in the Italian style, by men who had either studied Southern literature, or had submitted to its powerful æsthetic influences. The Masques, moreover, of Jonson, of Lyl, of Fletcher, and of Chapman are exact reproductions upon the English court theatres of such festival pageants as were presented to the Medici at Florence or to the Este family at Ferrara.¹ Throughout our drama the

¹ Marlowe makes Gaveston talk of ‘Italian masques.’ At the same time in the prologue to *Tamburlaine*, he shows that he was conscious of the new and nobler direction followed by the drama in England.

influence of Italy, direct or indirect, either as supplying our playwrights with subjects or as stimulating their imagination, may thus be traced. Yet the Elizabethan drama is in the highest sense original. As a work of art pregnant with deepest wisdom, and splendidly illustrative of the age which gave it birth, it far transcends anything that Italy produced in the same department. Our poets have a more masculine judgment, more fiery fancy, nobler sentiment, than the Italians of any age but that of Dante. What Italy gave, was the impulse toward creation, not patterns to be imitated—the excitement of the imagination by a spectacle of so much grandeur, not rules and precepts for production—the keen sense of tragic beauty, not any tradition of accomplished art.

The Elizabethan period of our literature was, in fact, the period during which we derived most from the Italian nation. The study of the Italian language went hand in hand with the study of Greek and Latin, so that the three together contributed to form the English taste. Between us and the ancient world stood the genius of Italy as an interpreter. Nor was this connection broken until far on into the reign of Charles II. What Milton owed to Italy is clear not only from his Italian sonnets, but also from the frequent mention of Dante and Petrarch in his prose works, from his allusions to Boiardo and Ariosto in the ‘Paradise Lost,’ and from the hints which he probably derived from Pulci, Tasso and Andreini. It would, indeed, be easy throughout his works to trace a continuous vein of Italian influence in detail. But, more than this, Milton’s poetical taste in general seems to have been formed and ripened by familiarity with the harmonies of the Italian language. In his Tractate on Education addressed to Mr. Hartlib, he recommends that boys should be instructed in the Italian pronunciation of vowel sounds, in order to give sonorousness and dignity to elocution. This slight indication supplies us with a key to the method of melodious structure employed by Milton in his

blank verse. Those who have carefully studied the harmonies of the ‘*Paradise Lost*,’ know how all-important are the assonances of the vowel sounds of *o* and *a* in its most musical passages. It is just this attention to the liquid and sonorous recurrences of open vowels that we should expect from a poet who proposed to assimilate his diction to that of the Italians.

After the age of Milton the connection between Italy and England is interrupted. In the seventeenth century Italy herself had sunk into comparative stupor, and her literature was trivial. France not only swayed the political destinies of Europe, but also took the lead in intellectual culture. Consequently, our poets turned from Italy to France, and the French spirit pervaded English literature throughout the period of the Restoration and the reigns of William and Queen Anne. Yet during this prolonged reaction against the earlier movement of English literature, as manifested in Elizabethanism, the influence of Italy was not wholly extinct. Dryden’s ‘*Tales from Boccaccio*’ are no insignificant contribution to our poetry, and his ‘*Palamon and Arcite*,’ through Chaucer, returns to the same source. But when, at the beginning of this century, the Elizabethan tradition was revived, then the Italian influence reappeared more vigorous than ever. The metre of ‘*Don Juan*,’ first practised by Frere and then adopted by Lord Byron, is Pulci’s octave stanza; the manner is that of Berni, Folengo, and the Abbé Casti, fused and heightened by the brilliance of Byron’s genius into a new form. The subject of Shelley’s strongest work of art is Beatrice Cenci. Rogers’s poem is styled ‘*Italy*.’ Byron’s dramas are chiefly Italian. Leigh Hunt repeats the tale of Francesca da Rimini. Keats versifies Boccaccio’s ‘*Isabella*.’ Passing to contemporary poets, Rossetti has acclimatised in English the metres and the manner of the earliest Italian lyrists. Swinburne dedicates his noblest song to the spirit of liberty in Italy. Even George

Eliot and Tennyson have each of them turned stories of Boccaccio into verse. The best of Mrs. Browning's poems, 'Casa Guidi Windows' and 'Aurora Leigh,' are steeped in Italian thought and Italian imagery. Browning's longest poem is a tale of Italian crime; his finest studies in the 'Men and Women' are portraits of Italian character of the Renaissance period. But there is more than any mere enumeration of poets and their work can set forth, in the connection between Italy and England. That connection, so far as the poetical imagination is concerned, is vital. As poets in the truest sense of the word, we English live and breathe through sympathy with the Italians. The magnetic touch which is required to inflame the imagination of the North, is derived from Italy. The nightingales of English song who make our oak and beech copses resonant in spring with purest melody, are migratory birds, who have charged their souls in the South with the spirit of beauty, and who return to warble native wood-notes in a tongue which is their own.

What has hitherto been said about the debt of the English poets to Italy, may seem to imply that our literature can be regarded as to some extent a parasite on that of the Italians. Against such a conclusion no protest too energetic could be uttered. What we have derived directly from the Italian poets are, first, some metres—especially the sonnet and the octave stanza, though the latter has never taken firm root in England. 'Terza rima,' attempted by Shelley, Byron, Morris, and Mrs. Browning, has not yet become acclimatised. Blank verse, although originally remodelled by Surrey upon the *versi sciolti* of the Italians, has departed widely from Italian precedent, first by its decasyllabic structure, whereas Italian verse consists of hendecasyllables; and, secondly, by its greater force, plasticity, and freedom. The Spenserian stanza, again, is a new and original metre peculiar to our literature; though it is possible that but for the complex structures of Italian lyric

verse, it might not have been fashioned for the ‘Faery Queen.’ Lastly, the so-called heroic couplet is native to England ; at any rate, it is in no way related to Italian metre. Therefore the only true Italian exotic adopted without modification into our literature is the sonnet.

In the next place, we owe to the Italians the subject-matter of many of our most famous dramas and our most delightful tales in verse. But the English treatment of these histories and fables has been uniformly independent and original. Comparing Shakspere’s ‘Romeo and Juliet’ with Bandello’s tale, Webster’s ‘Duchess of Malfy’ with the version given from the Italian in Painter’s ‘Palace of Pleasure,’ and Chaucer’s Knight’s Tale with the ‘Teseide’ of Boccaccio, we perceive at once that the English poets have used their Italian models merely as outlines to be filled in with freedom, as the canvas to be embroidered with a tapestry of vivid groups. Nothing is more manifest than the superiority of the English genius over the Italian in all dramatic qualities of intense passion, profound analysis, and living portrayal of character in action. The mere rough detail of Shakspere’s ‘Othello’ is to be found in Cinthio’s Collection of Novelle ; but let an unprejudiced reader peruse the original, and he will be no more deeply affected by it than by any touching story of treachery, jealousy, and hapless innocence. The wily subtleties of Iago, the soldierly frankness of Cassio, the turbulent and volcanic passions of Othello, the charm of Desdemona, and the whole tissue of vivid incidents which make ‘Othello’ one of the most tremendous extant tragedies of characters in combat, are Shakspere’s, and only Shakespere’s. This instance, indeed, enables us exactly to indicate what the English owed to Italy and what was essentially their own. From that Southern land of Circe about which they dreamed, and which now and then they visited, came to their imaginations a spirit-stirring breath of inspiration. It was to them the country of marvels, of mysterious crimes, of

luxurious gardens and splendid skies, where love was more passionate and life more picturesque, and hate more bloody and treachery more black, than in our Northern climes. Italy was a spacious grove of wizardry, which mighty poets, on the quest of fanciful adventure, trod with fascinated senses and quickened pulses. But the strong brain which converted what they heard and read and saw of that charmed land into the stuff of golden romance or sable tragedy, was their own.

English literature has been defined a literature of genius. Our greatest work in art has been achieved not so much by inspiration, subordinate to sentiments of exquisite good taste or guided by observance of classical models, as by audacious sallies of pure inventive power. This is true as a judgment of that constellation which we call our drama, of the meteor Byron, of Milton and Dryden, who are the Jupiter and Mars of our poetic system, and of the stars which stud our literary firmament under the names of Shelley, Keats, Wordsworth, Chatterton, Scott, Coleridge, Clough, Blake, Browning, Swinburne, Tennyson. There are only a very few of the English poets, Pope and Gray, for example, in whom the free instincts of genius are kept systematically in check by the laws of the reflective understanding. Now Italian literature is in this respect all unlike our own. It began, indeed, with Dante, as a literature pre-eminently of genius ; but the spirit of scholarship assumed the sway as early as the days of Petrarch and Boccaccio, and after them Italian has been consistently a literature of taste. By this I mean that even the greatest Italian poets have sought to render their style correct, have endeavoured to subordinate their inspiration to what they considered the rules of sound criticism, and have paid serious attention to their manner as independent of the matter they wished to express. The passion for antiquity, so early developed in Italy, delivered the later Italian poets bound hand and foot into the hands of Horace. Poliziano was content to

reproduce the classic authors in a mosaic work of exquisite translations. Tasso was essentially a man of talent, producing work of chastened beauty by diligent attention to the rule and method of his art. Even Ariosto submitted the liberty of his swift spirit to canons of prescribed elegance. While our English poets have conceived and executed without regard for the opinion of the learned and without obedience to the usages of language—Shakspere, for example, producing tragedies which set Aristotle at defiance, and Milton engrafting Latinisms on the native idiom—the Italian poets thought and wrote with the fear of Academies before their eyes, and studied before all things to maintain the purity of the Tuscan tongue. The consequence is that the Italian and English literatures are eminent for very different excellences. All that is forcible in the dramatic presentation of life and character and action, all that is audacious in imagination and capricious in fancy, whatever strength style can gain from the sallies of original and untrammelled eloquence, whatever beauty is derived from spontaneity and native grace, belong in abundant richness to the English. On the other hand, the Italian poets present us with masterpieces of correct and studied diction, with carefully elaborated machinery, and with a style maintained at a uniform level of dignified correctness. The weakness of the English proceeds from inequality and extravagance ; it is the weakness of self-confident vigour, intolerant of rule, rejoicing in its own exuberant resources. The weakness of the Italian is due to timidity and moderation ; it is the weakness that springs not so much from a lack of native strength as from the over-anxious expenditure of strength upon the attainment of finish, polish, and correctness. Hence the two nations have everything to learn from one another. Modern Italian poets may seek by contact with Shakspere and Milton to gain a freedom from the trammels imposed upon them by the slavish followers of Petrarch ; while the attentive perusal of Tasso should be

recommended to all English people who have no ready access to the masterpieces of Greek and Latin literature.

Another point of view may be gained by noticing the predominant tone of the two literatures. Whenever English poetry is really great, it approximates to the tragic and the stately ; whereas the Italians are peculiarly felicitous in the smooth and pleasant style, which combines pathos with amusement, and which does not trespass beyond the region of beauty into the domain of sublimity or terror. Italian poetry is analogous to Italian painting and Italian music : it bathes the soul in a plenitude of charms, investing even the most solemn subjects with loveliness. Rembrandt and Albert Dürer depict the tragedies of the Sacred History with a serious and awful reality : Italian painters, with a few rare but illustrious exceptions, shrink from approaching them from any point of view but that of harmonious melancholy. Even so the English poets stir the soul to its very depths by their profound and earnest delineations of the stern and bitter truths of the world : Italian poets environ all things with the golden haze of an artistic harmony ; so that the soul is agitated by no pain at strife with the persuasions of pure beauty.

POPULAR ITALIAN POETRY OF THE RENAISSANCE.

THE semi-popular poetry of the Italians in the fifteenth century formed an important branch of their national literature, and flourished independently of the courtly and scholastic studies which gave a special character to the golden age of the revival. While the latter tended to separate the people from the cultivated classes, the former established a new link of connection between them, different indeed from that which existed when smiths and carters repeated the *Canzoni* of Dante by heart in the fourteenth century, but still sufficiently real to exercise a weighty influence over the national development. Scholars like Angelo Poliziano, princes like Lorenzo de' Medici, men of letters like Feo Belcari and Benivieni, borrowed from the people forms of poetry, which they handled with refined taste, and appropriated to the uses of polite literature. The most important of these forms, native to the people but assimilated by the learned classes, were the *Miracle Play* or '*Sacra Rappresentazione*' ; the '*Ballata*' or lyric to be sung while dancing ; the '*Canto Carnascialesco*' or Carnival Chorus ; the '*Rispetto*' or short love-ditty ; the '*Lauda*' or hymn ; the '*Maggio*' or May-song ; and the '*Madrigale*' or little part-song.

At Florence, where even under the despotism of the Medici a show of republican life still lingered, all classes joined in the amusements of carnival and spring time ; and

this poetry of the dance, the pageant, and the villa flourished side by side with the more serious efforts of the humanistic muse. It is not my purpose in this place to inquire into the origins of each lyrical type, to discuss the alterations they may have undergone at the hands of educated versifiers, or to define their several characteristics ; but only to offer translations of such as seem to me best suited to represent the genius of the people and the age.

In the composition of the poetry in question, Angelo Poliziano was indubitably the most successful. This giant of learning, who filled the lecture-rooms of Florence with students of all nations, and whose critical and rhetorical labours marked an epoch in the history of scholarship, was by temperament a poet, and a poet of the people. Nothing was easier for him than to throw aside his professor's mantle, and to improvise 'Ballate' for the girls to sing as they danced their 'Carola' upon the Piazza di Santa Trinità in summer evenings. The peculiarity of this lyric is that it starts with a couplet, which also serves as refrain, supplying the rhyme to each successive stanza. The stanza itself is identical with our rime royal, if we count the couplet in the place of the seventh line. The form is in itself so graceful and is so beautifully treated by Poliziano that I cannot content myself with fewer than four of his *Ballate*.¹ The first is written on the world-old theme of 'Gather ye rosebuds while ye may.'

I went a roaming, maidens, one bright day,
In a green garden in mid month of May.

Violets and lilies grew on every side
Mid the green grass, and young flowers wonderful,
Golden and white and red and azure-eyed ;
Toward which I stretched my hands, eager to pull
Plenty to make my fair curls beautiful,
To crown my rippling curls with garlands gay.

¹ I need hardly guard myself against being supposed to mean that the form of *Ballata* in question was the only one of its kind in Italy.

I went a roaming, maidens, one bright day,
In a green garden in mid month of May.

But when my lap was full of flowers I spied
Roses at last, roses of every hue ;
Therefore I ran to pluck their ruddy pride,
Because their perfume was so sweet and true
That all my soul went forth with pleasure new,
With yearning and desire too soft to say.

I went a roaming, maidens, one bright day,
In a green garden in mid month of May.

I gazed and gazed. Hard task it were to tell
How lovely were the roses in that hour :
One was but peeping from her verdant shell,
And some were faded, some were scarce in flower :
Then Love said : Go, pluck from the blooming bower
Those that thou seest ripe upon the spray.

I went a roaming, maidens, one bright day,
In a green garden in mid month of May.

For when the full rose quits her tender sheath,
When she is sweetest and most fair to see,
Then is the time to place her in thy wreath,
Before her beauty and her freshness flee.
Gather ye therefore roses with great glee,
Sweet girls, or ere their perfume pass away.

I went a roaming, maidens, one bright day,
In a green garden in mid month of May.

The next Ballata is less simple, but is composed with the same intention. It may here be parenthetically mentioned that the courtly poet, when he applied himself to this species of composition, invented a certain rusticity of incident, scarcely in keeping with the spirit of his art. It was in fact a conventional feature of this species of verse that the scene should be laid in the country, where the burgher, on a visit to his villa, is supposed to meet with a rustic beauty who captivates his eyes and heart. Guido Cavalcanti, in his celebrated Ballata, ‘ In un boschetto trovai pastorella,’ struck the keynote of this music,

which, it may be reasonably conjectured, was imported into Italy through Provençal literature from the pastorals of Northern France. The lady so quaintly imaged by a bird in the following Ballata of Poliziano is supposed to have been Monna Ippolita Leoncina of Prato, white-throated, golden-haired, and dressed in crimson silk.

I found myself one day all, all alone,
For pastime in a field with blossoms strewn.

I do not think the world a field could show
With herbs of perfume so surpassing rare ;
But when I passed beyond the green hedge-row,
A thousand flowers around me flourished fair,
White, pied and crimson, in the summer air ;
Among the which I heard a sweet bird's tone.

I found myself one day all, all alone,
For pastime in a field with blossoms strewn.

Her song it was so tender and so clear
That all the world listened with love ; then I
With stealthy feet a-tiltœoe drawing near,
Her golden head and golden wings could spy,
Her plumes that flashed like rubies neathe the sky,
Her crystal beak and throat and bosom's zone.

I found myself one day all, all alone,
For pastime in a field with blossoms strewn.

Fain would I snare her, smit with mighty love ;
But arrow-like she soared, and through the air
Fled to her nest upon the boughs above ;
Wherefore to follow her is all my care,
For haply I might lure her by some snare
Forth from the woodland wild where she is flown.

I found myself one day all, all alone,
For pastime in a field with blossoms strewn,

Yea, I might spread some net or woven wile ;
But since of singing she doth take such pleasure,
Without or other art or other guile
I seek to win her with a tuneful measure ;
Therefore in singing spend I all my leisure,
To make by singing this sweet bird my own.

I found myself one day all, all alone,
For pastime in a field with blossoms strewn.

The same lady is more directly celebrated in the next Ballata, where Poliziano calls her by her name, Ippolita. I have taken the liberty of substituting Myrrha for this somewhat unmanageable word.

He who knows not what thing is Paradise,
Let him look fixedly on Myrrha's eyes.

From Myrrha's eyes there flieth, girt with fire,
An angel of our lord, a laughing boy,
Who lights in frozen hearts a flaming pyre,
And with such sweetness doth the soul destroy,
That while it dies, it murmurs forth its joy :
Oh blessed am I to dwell in Paradise !

He who knows not what thing is Paradise,
Let him look fixedly on Myrrha's eyes.

From Myrrha's eyes a virtue still doth move,
So swift and with so fierce and strong a flight,
That it is like the lightning of high Jove,
Riving of iron and adamant the might ;
Nathless the wound doth carry such delight
That he who suffers dwells in Paradise.

He who knows not what thing is Paradise,
Let him look fixedly on Myrrha's eyes.

From Myrrha's eyes a lovely messenger
Of joy so grave, so virtuous, doth flee,
That all proud souls are bound to bend to her
So sweet her countenance, it turns the key
Of hard hearts locked in cold security :
Forth flies the prisoned soul to Paradise.

He who knows not what thing is Paradise,
Let him look fixedly on Myrrha's eyes.

In Myrrha's eyes beauty doth make her throne,
And sweetly smile and sweetly speak her mind :
Such grace in her fair eyes a man hath known
As in the whole wide world he scarce may find ;
Yet if she slay him with a glance too kind,
He lives again beneath her gazing eyes.

He who knows not what thing is Paradise,
Let him look fixedly on Myrrha's eyes.

The fourth Ballata sets forth the fifteenth-century Italian

code of love, the code of the Novelle, very different in its avowed laxity from the high ideal of the trecentisti poets.

I ask no pardon if I follow Love;
Since every gentle heart is thrall thereof.

From those who feel the fire I feel, what use
Is there in asking pardon? These are so
Gentle, kind-hearted, tender, piteous,
That they will have compassion, well I know.
From such as never felt that honeyed woe,
I seek no pardon: nought they know of Love.

I ask no pardon if I follow Love;
Since every gentle heart is thrall thereof.

Honour, pure love, and perfect gentleness,
Weighed in the scales of equity refined,
Are but one thing: beauty is nought or less,
Placed in a dame of proud and scornful mind.
Who can rebuke me then if I am kind
So far as honesty comports and Love?

I ask no pardon if I follow Love;
Since every gentle heart is thrall thereof.

Let him rebuke me whose hard heart of stone
Ne'er felt of Love the summer in his vein!
I pray to Love that who hath never known
Love's power, may ne'er be blessed with Love's great gain;
But he who serves our lord with might and main,
May dwell for ever in the fire of Love!

I ask no pardon if I follow Love;
Since every gentle heart is thrall thereof.

Let him rebuke me without cause who will;
For if he be not gentle, I fear nought:
My heart obedient to the same love still
Hath little heed of light words envy-fraught:
So long as life remains, it is my thought
To keep the laws of this so gentle Love.

I ask no pardon if I follow Love;
Since every gentle heart is thrall thereof.

This Ballata is put into a woman's mouth. Another, ascribed to Lorenzo de' Medici, expresses the sadness of a man

who has lost the favour of his lady. It illustrates the well-known use of the word *Signore* for mistress in Florentine poetry.

How can I sing light-souled and fancy-free,
When my loved lord no longer smiles on me?

Dances and songs and merry wakes I leave
To lovers fair, more fortunate and gay ;
Since to my heart so many sorrows cleave
That only doleful tears are mine for aye :
Who hath heart's ease, may carol, dance, and play ;
While I am fain to weep continually.

How can I sing light-souled and fancy-free,
When my loved lord no longer smiles on me ?

I too had heart's ease once, for so Love willed,
When my lord loved me with love strong and great :
But envious fortune my life's music stilled,
And turned to sadness all my gleeful state.
Ah me ! Death surely were less desolate
Than thus to live and love-neglected be !

How can I sing light-souled and fancy-free,
When my loved lord no longer smiles on me ?

One only comfort soothes my heart's despair,
And mid this sorrow lends my soul some cheer ;
Unto my lord I ever yielded fair
Service of faith untainted pure and clear ;
If then I die thus guiltless, on my bier
It may be she will shed one tear for me.

How can I sing light-souled and fancy-free,
When my loved lord no longer smiles on me ?

The Florentine *Rispetto* was written for the most part in octave stanzas, detached or continuous. The octave stanza in Italian literature was an emphatically popular form ; and it is still largely used in many parts of the peninsula for the lyrical expression of emotion.¹ Poliziano did no more than treat it with his own facility, sacrificing the unstudied raciness of his popular models to literary elegance.

¹ See my *Sketches in Italy and Greece*, p. 114.

Here are a few of these detached stanzas or *Rispetti Spicciolati* :—

Upon that day when first I saw thy face,
I vowed with loyal love to worship thee.
Move, and I move; stay, and I keep my place:
Whate'er thou dost, will I do equally.
In joy of thine I find most perfect grace,
And in thy sadness dwells my misery:
Laugh, and I laugh; weep, and I too will weep.
Thus Love commands, whose laws I loving keep.

Nay, be not over-proud of thy great grace,
Lady! for brief time is thy thief and mine.
White will he turn those golden curls, that lace
Thy forehead and thy neck so marble-fine.
Lo! while the flower still flourisheth apace,
Pluck it: for beauty but awhile doth shine.
Fair is the rose at dawn; but long ere night
Her freshness fades, her pride hath vanished quite.

Fire, fire! Ho, water! for my heart's afire!
Ho, neighbours! help me, or by God I die!
See, with his standard, that great lord, Desire!
He sets my heart afame: in vain I cry.
Too late, alas! The flames mount high and higher.
Alack, good friends! I faint, I fail, I die.
Ho! water, neighbours mine! no more delay!
My heart's a cinder if you do but stay.

Lo, may I prove to Christ a renegade,
And, dog-like, die in pagan Barbary;
Nor may God's mercy on my soul be laid,
If ere for aught I shall abandon thee:
Before all-seeing God this prayer be made—
When I desert thee, may death feed on me:
Now if thy hard heart scorn these vows, be sure
That without faith none may abide secure.

I ask not, Love, for any other pain
To make thy cruel foe and mine repent,
Only that thou shouldst yield her to the strain
Of these my arms, alone, for chastisement;
Then would I clasp her so with might and main,
That she should learn to pity and relent,
And, in revenge for scorn and proud despite,
A thousand times I'd kiss her forehead white.

Not always do fierce tempests vex the sea,
 Nor always clinging clouds offend the sky ;
 Cold snows before the sunbeams haste to flee,
 Disclosing flowers that neathe their whiteness lie ;
 The saints each one doth wait his day to see,
 And time makes all things change ; so, therefore, I
 Ween that 'tis wise to wait my turn, and say,
 That who subdues himself, deserves to sway.

It will be observed that the tone of these poems is not passionate nor elevated. Love, as understood in Florence of the fifteenth century, was neither ; nor was Poliziano the man to have revived Platonic mysteries or chivalrous enthusiasms. When the octave stanzas, written with this amorous intention, were strung together into a continuous poem, this form of verse took the title of *Rispetto Continuato*. In the collection of Poliziano's poems there are several examples of the long Rispetto, carelessly enough composed, as may be gathered from the recurrence of the same stanzas in several poems. All repeat the old arguments, the old enticements to a less than lawful love. The one which I have chosen for translation, styled *Serenata ovvero Lettera in Istrambotti*, might be selected as an epitome of Florentine convention in the matter of love-making.

O thou of fairest fairs the first and queen,
 Most courteous, kind, and honourable dame,
 Thine ear unto thy servant's singing lean,
 Who loves thee more than health, or wealth, or fame ;
 For thou his shining planet still hast been,
 And day and night he calls on thy fair name :
 First wishing thee all good the world can give,
 Next praying in thy gentle thoughts to live.

He humbly prayeth that thou shouldst be kind
 To think upon his pure and perfect faith,
 And that such mercy in thy heart and mind
 Should reign, as so much beauty argueth :
 A thousand, thousand hints, or he were blind,
 Of thy great courtesy he reckoneth :
 Wherefore thy loyal subject now doth sue
 Such guerdon only as shall prove them true.

He knows himself unmeet for love from thee,
 Unmeet for merely gazing on thine eyes ;
 Seeing thy comely squires so plenteous be,
 That there is none but 'neath thy beauty sighs :
 Yet since thou seekest fame and bravery,
 Nor carest aught for gauds that others prize,
 And since he strives to honour thee alway,
 He still hath hope to gain thy heart one day.

Virtue that dwells untold, unknown, unseen,
 Still findeth none to love or value it ;
 Wherefore his faith, that hath so perfect been,
 Not being known, can profit him no whit :
 He would find pity in thine eyes, I ween,
 If thou shouldst deign to make some proof of it ;
 The rest may flatter, gape, and stand agaze ;
 Him only faith above the crowd doth raise.

Suppose that he might meet thee once alone,
 Face unto face, without or jealousy,
 Or doubt or fear from false misgiving grown,
 And tell his tale of grievous pain to thee,
 Sure from thy breast he'd draw full many a moan,
 And make thy fair eyes weep right plenteously :
 Yea, if he had but skill his heart to show,
 He scarce could fail to win thee by its woe.

Now art thou in thy beauty's blooming hour ;
 Thy youth is yet in pure perfection's prime :
 Make it thy pride to yield thy fragile flower,
 Or look to find it paled by envious time :
 For none to stay the flight of years hath power,
 And who culls roses caught by frosty rime ?
 Give therefore to thy lover, give, for they
 Too late repent who act not while they may.

Time flies : and lo ! thou let'st it idly fly :
 There is not in the world a thing more dear :
 And if thou wait to see sweet May pass by,
 Where find'st thou roses in the later year ?
 He never can, who lets occasion die :
 Now that thou canst, stay not for doubt or fear ;
 But by the forelock take the flying hour,
 Ere change begins, and clouds above thee lower.

Too long 'twixt yea and nay he hath been wrung ;
 Whether he sleep or wake he little knows,

Or free or in the bands of bondage strung :
 Nay, lady, strike, and let thy lover loose !
 What joy hast thou to keep a captive hung ?
 Kill him at once, or cut the cruel noose :
 No more, I prithee, stay ; but take thy part :
 Either relax the bow, or speed the dart.

Thou feedest him on words and windiness,
 On smiles, and signs, and bladders light as air ;
 Saying, thou fain wouldest comfort his distress,
 But dar'st not, canst not : nay, dear lady fair,
 All things are possible beneath the stress
 Of will, that flames above the soul's despair !
 Dally no longer : up, set to thy hand ;
 Or see his love unclothed and naked stand.

For he hath sworn, and by this oath will bide,
 E'en though his life be lost in the endeavour,
 To leave no way, nor art, nor wile untried,
 Until he pluck the fruit he sighs for ever :
 And, though he still would spare thy honest pride,
 The knot that binds him he must loose or sever ;
 Thou too, O lady, shouldst make sharp thy knife,
 If thou art fain to end this amorous strife.

Lo ! if thou lingerest still in dubious dread,
 Lest thou shouldst lose fair fame of honesty,
 Here hast thou need of wile and warhead,
 To test thy lover's strength in screening thee ;
 Indulge him, if thou find him well bestead,
 Knowing that smothered love flames outwardly :
 Therefore, seek means, search out some privy way ;
 Keep not the steed too long at idle play.

Or if thou heedest what those friars teach,
 I cannot fail, lady, to call thee fool :
 Well may they blame our private sins and preach ;
 But ill their acts match with their spoken rule ;
 The same pitch clings to all men, one and each.
 There, I have spoken : set the world to school !
 With this true proverb, too, be well acquainted :
 The devil's ne'er so black as he is painted.

Nor did our good Lord give such grace to thee
 That thou shouldst keep it buried in thy breast,
 But to reward thy servant's constancy,
 Whose love and loyal faith thou hast repressed :

'Think it no sin to be some trifle free,
 Because thou livest at a lord's behest ;
 For if he take enough to feed his fill,
 To cast the rest away were surely ill.

They find most favour in the sight of heaven
 Who to the poor and hungry are most kind ;
 A hundred-fold shall thus to thee be given
 By God, who loves the free and generous mind ;
 Thrice strike thy breast, with pure contrition riven,
 Crying : I sinned ; my sin hath made me blind !—
 He wants not much : enough if he be able
 To pick up crumbs that fall beneath thy table.

Wherefore, O lady, break the ice at length ;
 Make thou, too, trial of love's fruits and flowers :
 When in thine arms thou feel'st thy lover's strength,
 Thou wilt repent of all these wasted hours :
 Husbands, they know not love, its breadth and length,
 Seeing their hearts are not on fire like ours :
 Things longed for give most pleasure ; this I tell thee ;
 If still thou doubttest let the proof compel thee.

What I have spoken is pure gospel sooth ;
 I have told all my mind, withholding nought :
 And well, I ween, thou canst unhusk the truth,
 And through the riddle read the hidden thought :
 Perchance if heaven still smile upon my youth,
 Some good effect for me may yet be wrought :
 Then fare thee well ; too many words offend :
 She who is wise is quick to comprehend.

The levity of these love-declarations and the fluency of their vows show them to be 'false as dicers' oaths,' mere verses of the moment, made to please a facile mistress. One long poem, which cannot be styled a Rispetto, but is rather a Canzone of the legitimate type, stands out with distinctness from the rest of Poliziano's love-verses. It was written by him for Giuliano de' Medici, in praise of the fair Simonetta. The following version attempts to repeat its metrical effects in some measure :—

My task it is, since thus Love wills, who strains
And forces all the world beneath his sway,
In lowly verse to say
The great delight that in my bosom reigns.
For if perchance I took but little pains
To tell some part of all the joy I find,
I might be deem'd unkind
By one who knew my heart's deep happiness.
He feels but little bliss who hides his bliss;
Small joy hath he whose joy is never sung;
And he who curbs his tongue
Through cowardice, knows but of love the name.
Wherefore to succour and augment the fame
Of that pure, virtuous, wise, and lovely may,
Who like the star of day
Shines mid the stars, or like the rising sun,
Forth from my burning heart the words shall run.
Far, far be envy, far be jealous fear,
With discord dark and drear,
And all the choir that is of love the foe.—
The season had returned when soft winds blow,
The season friendly to young lovers coy,
Which bids them clothe their joy
In divers garbs and many a masked disguise.
Then I to track the game 'neath April skies
Went forth in raiment strange apparellèd,
And by kind fate was led
Unto the spot were stayed my soul's desire.
The beauteous nymph who feeds my soul with fire,
I found in gentle, pure, and prudent mood,
In graceful attitude,
Loving and courteous, holy, wise, benign.
So sweet, so tender was her face divine,
So gladsome, that in those celestial eyes
Shone perfect paradise,
Yea, all the good that we poor mortals crave.
Around her was a band so nobly brave
Of beauteous dames, that as I gazed at these,
Methought heaven's goddesses
That day for once had deigned to visit earth.
But she who gives my soul sorrow and mirth,
Seemed Pallas in her gait, and in her face
Venus; for every grace
And beauty of the world in her combined.
Merely to think, far more to tell my mind

Of that most wondrous sight, confoundeth me,
For mid the maidens she
Who most resembled her was found most rare
Call ye another first among the fair;
Not first, but sole before my lady set:
Lily and violet
And all the flowers below the rose must bow.
Down from her royal head and lustrous brow
The golden curls fell sportively unpent,
While through the choir she went
With feet well lessoned to the rhythmic sound.
Her eyes, though scarcely raised above the ground,
Sent me by stealth a ray divinely fair;
But still her jealous hair
Broke the bright beam, and veiled her from my gaze.
She, born and nursed in heaven for angels' praise,
No sooner saw this wrong, than back she drew,
With hand of purest hue,
Her truant curls with kind and gentle mien.
Then from her eyes a soul so fiery keen,
So sweet a soul of love she cast on mine,
That scarce can I divine
How then I 'scaped from burning utterly.
These are the first fair signs of love to be,
That bound my heart with adamant, and these
The matchless courtesies
Which, dreamlike, still before mine eyes must hover.
This is the honeyed food she gave her lover,
To make him, so it pleased her, half-divine;
Nectar is not so fine,
Nor ambrosy, the fabled feast of Jove.
Then, yielding proofs more clear and strong of love,
As though to show the faith within her heart,
She moved, with subtle art,
Her feet accordant to the amorous air.
But while I gaze and pray to God that ne'er
Might cease that happy dance angelical,
O, harsh, unkind recall!
Back to the banquet was she beckonèd.
She, with her face at first with pallor spread,
Then tinted with a blush of coral dye,
'The ball is best!' did cry,
Gentle in tone and smiling as she spake.
But from her eyes celestial forth did break

Favour at parting ; and I well could see
 Young love confusedly
 Enclosed within the furtive fervent gaze,
 Heating his arrows at their beauteous rays,
 For war with Pallas and with Dian cold.
 Fairer than mortal mould,
 She moved majestic with celestial gait ;
 And with her hand her robe in royal state
 Raised, as she went with pride ineffable.
 Of me I cannot tell,
 Whether alive or dead I there was left.
 Nay, dead, methinks ! since I of thee was reft,
 Light of my life ! and yet, perchance, alive —
 Such virtue to revive
 My lingering soul possessed thy beauteous face.
 But if that powerful charm of thy great grace
 Could then thy loyal lover so sustain,
 Why comes there not again
 More often or more soon the sweet delight ?
 Twice hath the wandering moon with borrowed light
 Stored from her brother's rays her crescent horn,
 Nor yet hath fortune borne
 Me on the way to so much bliss again.
 Earth smiles anew ; fair spring renews her reign :
 The grass and every shrub once more is green ;
 The amorous birds begin,
 From winter loosed, to fill the field with song.
 See how in loving pairs the cattle throng ;
 The bull, the ram, their amorous jousts enjoy :
 Thou maiden, I a boy,
 Shall we prove traitors to love's law for aye ?
 Shall we these years that are so fair let fly ?
 Wilt thou not put thy flower of youth to use ?
 Or with thy beauty choose
 To make him blest who loves thee best of all ?
 Haply I am some hind who guards the stall,
 Or of vile lineage, or with years outworn,
 Poor, or a cripple born,
 Or faint of spirit that you spurn me so ?
 Nay, but my race is noble and doth grow
 With honour to our land, with pomp and power ;
 My youth is yet in flower,
 And it may chance some maiden sighs for me.
 My lot it is to deal right royally

With all the goods that fortune spreads around,
 For still they more abound,
 Shaken from her full lap, the more I waste.
 My strength is such as whoso tries shall taste ;
 Circled with friends, with favours crowned am I :
 Yet though I rank so high
 Among the blest, as men may reckon bliss,
 Still without thee, my hope, my happiness,
 It seems a sad, and bitter thing to live !
 Then stint me not, but give
 That joy which holds all joys enclosed in one.
 Let me pluck fruits at last, not flowers alone !

With much that is frigid, artificial, and tedious in this old-fashioned love-song, there is a curious monotony of sweetness which commends it to our ears ; and he who reads it may remember the profile portrait of Simonetta from the hand of Piero della Francesca in the Pitti Palace at Florence.

It is worth comparing Poliziano's treatment of popular or semi-popular verse-forms with his imitations of Petrarch's manner. For this purpose I have chosen a *Canzone*, clearly written in competition with the celebrated 'Chiare, fresche e dolci acque,' of Laura's lover. While closely modelled upon Petrarch's form and similar in motive, this *Canzone* preserves Poliziano's special qualities of fluency and emptiness of content.

Hills, valleys, caves and fells,
 With flowers and leaves and herbage spread ;
 Green meadows ; shadowy groves where light is low ;
 Lawns watered with the rills
 That cruel Love hath made me shed,
 Cast from these cloudy eyes so dark with woe ;
 Thou stream that still dost know
 What fell pangs pierce my heart,
 So dost thou murmur back my moan ;
 Lone bird that chaunted tone for tone,
 While in our descant drear Love sings his part ;
 Nymphs, woodland wanderers, wind and air ;
 List to the sound out-poured from my despair !

Seven times and once more seven
 The roseate dawn her beauteous brow
 Enwreathed with orient jewels hath displayed ;
 Cynthia once more in heaven
 Hath orbed her horns with silver now ;
 While in sea waves her brother's light was laid ;
 Since this high mountain glade
 Felt the white footstep fall
 Of that proud lady, who to spring
 Converts whatever woodland thing
 She may o'ershadow, touch, or heed at all.
 Here bloom the flowers, the grasses spring
 From her bright eyes, and drink what mine must bring.
 Yea, nourished with my tears
 Is every little leaf I see,
 And the stream rolls therewith a prouder wave.
 Ah me ! through what long years
 Will she withhold her face from me,
 Which stills the stormy skies howe'er they rave ?
 Speak ! or in grove or cave
 If one hath seen her stray,
 Plucking amid those grasses green
 Wreaths for her royal brows serene,
 Flowers white and blue and red and golden gay !
 Nay, prithee, speak, if pity dwell
 Among these woods, within this leafy dell !
 O Love ! 'twas here we saw,
 Beneath the new-fledged leaves that spring
 From this old beech, her fair form lowly laid :—
 The thought renewes my awe !
 How sweetly did her tresses fling
 Waves of wreathed gold unto the winds that strayed !
 Fire, frost within me played,
 While I beheld the bloom
 Of laughing flowers—O day of bliss !—
 Around those tresses meet and kiss,
 And roses in her lap of Love the home !
 Her grace, her port divinely fair,
 Describe it, Love ! myself I do not dare.
 In mute intent surprise
 I gazed, as when a hind is seen
 To dote upon its image in a rill ;
 Drinking those love-lit eyes,
 Those hands, that face, those words serene,

That song which with delight the heaven did fill,
 That smile which thralls me still,
 Which melteth stones unkind,
 Which in this woodland wilderness
 Tames every beast and stills the stress
 Of hurrying waters. Would that I could find
 Her footprints upon field or grove !
 I should not then be envious of Jove.

Thou cool stream rippling by,
 Where oft it pleased her to dip
 Her naked foot, how blest art thou !
 Ye branching trees on high,
 That spread your gnarled roots on the lip
 Of yonder hanging rock to drink heaven's dew !
 She often leaned on you,
 She who is my life's bliss !
 Thou ancient beech with moss o'ergrown,
 How do I envy thee thy throne,
 Found worthy to receive such happiness !
 Ye winds, how blissful must ye be,
 Since ye have borne to heaven her harmony !
 The winds that music bore,
 And wafted it to God on high,
 That Paradise might have the joy thereof.
 Flowers here she plucked, and wore
 Wild roses from the thorn hard by :
 This air she lightened with her look of love :
 This running stream above,
 She bent her face !—Ah me !
 Where am I ? What sweet makes me swoon ?
 What calm is in the kiss of noon ?
 Who brought me here ? Who speaks ? What melody ?
 Whence came pure peace into my soul ?
 What joy hath rapt me from my own control ?

Poliziano's refrain is always : 'Gather ye rosebuds while ye may. It is spring-time now and youth. Winter and old age are coming !' A *Maggio*, or May-day song, describing the games, dances, and jousting matches of the Florentine lads upon the morning of the first of May, expresses this facile philosophy of life with a quaintness that recalls Herrick. It will be noticed that the Maggio is built, so far as rhymes go, on the

same system as Poliziano's Ballata. It has considerable historical interest, for the opening couplet is said to be Guido Cavalcanti's, while the whole poem is claimed by Roscoe for Lorenzo de' Medici, and by Carducci with better reason for Poliziano.

Welcome in the May
And the woodland garland gay !

Welcome in the jocund spring
Which bids all men lovers be !
Maidens, up with carolling,
With your sweethearts stout and free,
With roses and with blossoms ye
Who deck yourselves this first of May !

Up, and forth into the pure
Meadows, mid the trees and flowers !
Every beauty is secure
With so many bachelors :
Beasts and birds amid the bowers
Burn with love this first of May.

Maidens, who are young and fair,
Be not harsh, I counsel you ;
For your youth cannot repair
Her prime of spring, as meadows do :
None be proud, but all be true
To men who love, this first of May.

Dance and carol every one
Of our band so bright and gay !
See your sweethearts how they run
Through the jousts for you to-day !
She who saith her lover nay,
Will deflower the sweets of May.

Lads in love take sword and shield
To make pretty girls their prize :
Yield ye, merry maidens, yield
To your lovers' vows and sighs :
Give his heart back ere it dies :
Wage not war this first of May.

He who steals another's heart,
Let him give his own heart too :
Who's the robber ? 'Tis the smart

Little cherub Cupid, who
Homage comes to pay with you,
Damsels, to the first of May.

Love comes smiling ; round his head
Lilies white and roses meet :
'Tis for you his flight is sped.
Fair one, haste our king to greet :
Who will fling him blossoms sweet
Soonest on this first of May ?

Welcome, stranger ! welcome, king !
Love, what hast thou to command ?
That each girl with wreaths should ring
Her lover's hair with loving hand,
That girls small and great should band
In Love's ranks this first of May.

The *Canto Carnascialesco*, for the final development, if not for the invention of which all credit must be given to Lorenzo de' Medici, does not greatly differ from the Maggio in structure. It admitted, however, of great varieties, and was generally more complex in its interweaving of rhymes. Yet the essential principle of an exordium which should also serve for a refrain, was rarely, if ever, departed from. Two specimens of the Carnival Song will serve to bring into close contrast two very different aspects of Florentine history. The earlier was composed by Lorenzo de' Medici at the height of his power and in the summer of Italian independence. It was sung by masquers attired in classical costume, to represent Bacchus and his crew.

Fair is youth and void of sorrow ;
But it hourly flies away.—
Youths and maids, enjoy to-day ;
Nought ye know about to-morrow.

This is Bacchus and the bright
Ariadne, lovers true !
They, in flying time's despite,
Each with each find pleasure new ;
These their Nymphs, and all their crew

Keep perpetual holiday.—
Youths and maids, enjoy to-day ;
Nought ye know about to-morrow.

These blithe Satyrs, wanton-eyed,
Of the Nymphs are paramours :
Through the caves and forests wide
They have snared them mid the flowers ;
Warmed with Bacchus, in his bowers,
Now they dance and leap alway.—
Youths and maids, enjoy to-day ;
Nought ye know about to-morrow.

These fair Nymphs, they are not loth
To entice their lovers' wiles.
None but thankless folk and rough
Can resist when Love beguiles.
Now enlaced, with wreathèd smiles,
All together dance and play.—
Youths and maids, enjoy to-day ;
Nought ye know about to-morrow.

See this load behind them plodding
On the ass ! Silenus he,
Old and drunken, merry, nodding,
Full of years and jollity ;
Though he goes so swayingly,
Yet he laughs and quaffs alway.—
Youths and maids, enjoy to-day ;
Nought ye know about to-morrow.

Midas treads a wearier measure :
All he touches turns to gold :
If there be no taste of pleasure,
What's the use of wealth untold ?
What's the joy his fingers hold,
When he's forced to thirst for aye ?—
Youths and maids, enjoy to-day ;
Nought ye know about to-morrow.

Listen well to what we're saying ;
Of to-morrow have no care !
Young and old together playing,
Bcys and girls, be blithe as air !
Every sorry thought forswear !
Keep perpetual holiday.—
Youths and maids, enjoy to-day
Nought ye know about to-morrow.

Ladies and gay lovers young !
Long live Bacchus, live Desire !
Dance and play ; let songs be sung ;
Let sweet love your bosoms fire ;
In the future come what may !—
Youth and maids, enjoy to-day !
Nought ye know about to-morrow.

Fair is youth and void of sorrow ;
But it hourly flies away.

The next, composed by Antonio Alamanni, after Lorenzo's death and the ominous passage of Charles VIII., was sung by masquers habited as skeletons. The car they rode on, was a Car of Death designed by Piero di Cosimo, and their music was purposely gloomy. If in the jovial days of the Medici the streets of Florence had rung to the thoughtless refrain, 'Nought ye know about to-morrow,' they now re-echoed with a cry of 'Penitence ;' for times had strangely altered, and the heedless past had brought forth a doleful present. The last stanza of Alamanni's chorus is a somewhat clumsy attempt to adapt the too real moral of his subject to the customary mood of the Carnival.

Sorrow, tears, and penitence
Are our doom of pain for aye :
This dead concourse riding by
Hath no cry but penitence !

E'en as you are, once were we :
You shall be as now we are :
We are dead men, as you see :
We shall see you dead men, where
Nought avails to take great care,
After sins, of penitence.

We too in the Carnival
Sang our love-songs through the town ;
Thus from sin to sin we all
Headlong, heedless, tumbled down :—
Now we cry, the world around,
Penitence ! oh, Penitence !

Senseless, blind, and stubborn fools !
 Time steals all things as he rides :
 Honours, glories, states, and schools,
 Pass away, and nought abides ;
 Till the tomb our carcase hides,
 And compels this penitence.

This sharp scythe you see us bear,
 Brings the world at length to woe :
 But from life to life we fare ;
 And that life is joy or woe :
 All heaven's bliss on him doth flow
 Who on earth does penitence.

Living here, we all must die ;
 Dying, every soul shall live :
 For the King of kings on high
 This fixed ordinance doth give :
 Lo, you all are fugitive !
 Penitence ! Cry Penitence !

Torment great and grievous dole
 Hath the thankless heart mid you :
 But the man of piteous soul
 Finds much honour in our crew :
 Love for loving is the due
 That prevents this penitence.

Sorrow, tears, and penitence
 Are our doom of pain for aye :
 This dead concourse riding by
 Hath no cry but Penitence !

One song for dancing, composed less upon the type of the Ballata than on that of the Carnival Song, may here be introduced, not only in illustration of the varied forms assumed by this style of poetry, but also because it is highly characteristic of Tuscan town-life. This poem in the vulgar style has been ascribed to Lorenzo de' Medici, but probably without due reason. It describes the manners and customs of female street gossips.

Since you beg with such a grace,
 How can I refuse a song,
 Wholesome, honest, void of wrong,
 On the follies of the place ?

Courteously on you I call ;
Listen well to what I sing :
For my roundelay to all
May perchance instruction bring,
And of life good lessoning.—
When in company you meet,
Or sit spinning, all the street
Clamours like a market-place.

Thirty of you there may be ;
Twenty-nine are sure to buzz,
And the single silent she
Racks her brains about her coz :—
Mrs. Buzz and Mrs. Huzz,
Mind your work, my ditty saith ;
Do not gossip till your breath
Fails and leaves you black of face !

Governments go out and in :—
You the truth must needs discover.
Is a girl about to win
A brave husband in her lover ?—
Straight you set to talk him over :
' Is he wealthy ? ' ' Does his coat
Fit ? ' ' And has he got a vote ? '
' Who's his father ? ' ' What's his race ? '

Out of window one head pokes ;
Twenty others do the same :—
Chatter, clatter !—creaks and croaks
All the year the same old game !—
' See my spinning ! ' cries one dame,
' Five long ells of cloth, I trow ! '
Cries another, ' Mine must go,
Drat it, to the bleaching base ! '

' Devil take the fowl ! ' says one :
' Mine are all bewitched, I guess ;
Cocks and hens with vermin run,
Mangy, filthy, featherless.'
Says another : ' I confess
Every hair I drop, I keep—
Plague upon it, in a heap
Falling off to my disgrace ! '

If you see a fellow walk
Up or down the street and back,
How you nod and wink and talk,

Hurry-skurry, cluck and clack!—
 ‘What, I wonder, does he lack
 Here about?’—‘There’s something wrong!’
 Till the poor man’s made a song
 For the female populace.

It were well you gave no thought
 To such idle company;
 Shun these gossips, care for nought
 But the business that you ply.
 You who chatter, you who cry,
 Heed my words; be wise, I pray:
 Fewer, shorter stories say:
 Bide at home, and mind your place.

Since you beg with such a grace,
 How can I refuse a song,
 Wholesome, honest, void of wrong,
 On the follies of the place?

The *Madrigale*, intended to be sung in parts, was another species of popular poetry cultivated by the greatest of Italian writers. Without seeking examples from such men as Petrarch, Michel Angelo, or Tasso, who used it as a purely literary form, I will content myself with a few Madrigals by anonymous composers, more truly popular in style, and more immediately intended for music.¹ The similarity both of manner and matter, between these little poems and the Ballate, is obvious. There is the same affectation of rusticity in both.

Cogliendo per un prato.

Plucking white lilies in a field I saw
 Fair women, laden with young Love’s delight:
 Some sang, some danced; but all were fresh and bright.
 Then by the margin of a fount they leaned,
 And of those flowers made garlands for their hair—
 Wreaths for their golden tresses quaint and rare.
 Forth from the field I passed, and gazed upon
 Their loveliness, and lost my heart to one.

¹ The originals will be found in Carducci’s *Studi Letterari* p. 273 *et seq.* I have preserved their rhyming structure.

Togliendo l'una all' altra.

One from the other borrowing leaves and flowers,
 I saw fair maidens neathe the summer trees,
 Weaving bright garlands with low love-ditties.
 Mid that sweet sisterhood the loveliest
 Turned her soft eyes to me, and whispered, 'Take !'
 Love-lost I stood, and not a word I spake.
 My heart she read, and her fair garland gave :
 Therefore I am her servant to the grave.

Appress' un fiume chiaro.

Hard by a crystal stream
 Girls and maids were dancing round
 A lilac with fair blossoms crowned.
 Mid these I spied out one
 So tender-sweet, so love-laden,
 She stole my heart with singing then :
 Love in her face so lovely-kind
 And eyes and hands my soul did bind.

Di riva in riva.

From lawn to lea Love led me down the valley,
 Seeking my hawk, where neathe a pleasant hill
 I spied fair maidens bathing in a rill.
 Lina was there all loveliness excelling ;
 The pleasure of her beauty made me sad,
 And yet at sight of her my soul was glad.
 Downward I cast mine eyes with modest seeming,
 And all atremble from the fountain fled :
 For each was naked as her maidenhead.
 Thence singing fared I through a flowery plain,
 Where bye and bye I found my hawk again !

Nel chiaro fiume.

Down a fair streamlet crystal-clear and pleasant
 I went a fishing all alone one day,
 And spied three maidens bathing there at play.
 Of love they told each other honeyed stories,
 While with white hands they smote the stream, to wet
 Their sunbright hair in the pure rivulet.
 Gazing I crouched among thick flowering leafage,

Till one who spied a rustling branch on high,
 Turned to her comrades with a sudden cry,
 And ' Go ! Nay, prithee go ! ' she called to me :
 ' To stay were surely but scant courtesy.'

Quel sole che nutrica.

The sun which makes a lily bloom,
 Leans down at times on her to gaze—
 Fairer, he deems, than his fair rays :
 Then, having looked a little while,
 He turns and tells the saints in bliss
 How marvellous her beauty is.
 Thus up in heaven with flute and string
 Thy loveliness the angels sing.

Di novo è giunt'.

Lo ! here hath come an errant knight
 On a barbed charger clothed in mail :
 His archers scatter iron hail.
 At brow and breast his mace he aims ;
 Who therefore hath not arms of proof,
 Let him live locked by door and roof ;
 Until Dame Summer on a day
 That grisly knight return to slay.

Poliziano's treatment of the octave stanza for Rispetti was comparatively popular. But in his poem of 'La Giostra,' written to commemorate the victory of Giuliano de' Medici in a tournament and to celebrate his mistress, he gave a new and richer form to the metre which Boccaccio had already used for epic verse. The slight and uninteresting framework of this poem, which opened a new sphere for Italian literature, and prepared the way for Ariosto's golden cantos, might be compared to one of those wire-baskets which children steep in alum-water, and incrust with crystals, sparkling, artificial, beautiful with colours not their own. The mind of Poliziano held, as it were, in solution all the images and thoughts of antiquity, all the riches of his native literature. In that vast reservoir of poems and mythologies and phrases, so patiently

accumulated, so tenaciously preserved, so thoroughly assimilated, he plunged the trivial subject he had chosen, and triumphantly presented to the world the *spolia opima* of scholarship and taste. What mattered it that the theme was slight? The art was perfect, the result splendid. One canto of 125 stanzas describes the youth of Giuliano, who sought to pass his life among the woods, a hunter dead to love, but who was doomed to be ensnared by Cupid. The chase, the beauty of Simonetta, the palace of Venus, these are the three subjects of a book as long as the first Iliad. The second canto begins with dreams and prophecies of glory to be won by Giuliano in the tournament. But it stops abruptly. The tragic catastrophe of the Pazzi Conjunction cut short Poliziano's panegyric by the murder of his hero. Meanwhile the poet had achieved his purpose. His torso presented to Italy a model of style, a piece of written art adequate to the great painting of the Renaissance period, a double star of poetry which blent the splendours of the ancient and the modern world. To render into worthy English the harmonies of Poliziano is a difficult task. Yet this must be attempted if an English reader is to gain any notion of the scope and substance of the Italian poet's art. In the first part of the poem we are placed, as it were, at the mid point between the 'Hippolytus' of Euripides' and Shakspere's 'Venus and Adonis.' The cold hunter Giuliano is to see Simonetta, and seeing, is to love her. This is how he first discovers the triumphant beauty :—¹

White is the maid, and white the robe around her,
 With buds and roses and thin grasses pied ;
 Enwreathèd folds of golden tresses crowned her,
 Shadowing her forehead fair with modest pride :
 The wild wood smiled ; the thicket where he found her,
 To ease his anguish, bloomed on every side :
 Serene she sits, with gesture queenly mild,
 And with her brow tempers the tempests wild.

¹ Stanza XLIII. All references are made to Carducci's excellent

After three stanzas of this sort, in which the poet's style is more apparent than the object he describes, occurs this charming picture :—

Reclined he found her on the swarded grass
 In jocund mood ; and garlands she had made
 Of every flower that in the meadow was,
 Or on her robe of many hues displayed ;
 But when she saw the youth before her pass,
 Raising her timid head awhile she stayed ;
 Then with her white hand gathered up her dress,
 And stood, lap-full of flowers, in loveliness.

Then through the dewy field with footstep slow
 The lingering maid began to take her way,
 Leaving her lover in great fear and woe,
 For now he longs for nought but her alway :
 The wretch, who cannot bear that she should go,
 Strives with a whispered prayer her feet to stay ;
 And thus at last, all trembling, all afire,
 In humble wise he breathes his soul's desire :

' Whoe'er thou art, maid among maidens queen,
 Goddess, or nymph—nay, goddess seems most clear—
 If goddess, sure my Dian I have seen ;
 If mortal, let thy proper self appear !
 Beyond terrestrial beauty is thy mien ;
 I have no merit that I should be here !
 What grace of heaven, what lucky star benign
 Yields me the sight of beauty so divine ? '

A conversation ensues, after which Giuliano departs utterly lovesick, and Cupid takes wing exultingly for Cyprus, where his mother's palace stands. In the following picture of the house of Venus, who shall say how much of Ariosto's *Alcina* and Tasso's *Armida* is contained ? Cupid arrives, and the family of Love is filled with joy at Giuliano's conquest. From the plan of the poem it is clear that its beauties are chiefly those of detail. They are, however, very great. How perfect, for

example, is the richness combined with delicacy of the following description of a country life :—

Book I. Stanzas 17—21.

How far more safe it is, how far more fair,
To chase the flying deer along the lea;
Through ancient woods to track their hidden lair,
Far from the town, with long-drawn subtlety :
To scan the vales, the hills, the limpid air,
The grass and flowers, clear ice, and streams so free ;
To hear the birds wake from their winter trance,
The wind-stirred leaves and murmuring waters dance.

How sweet it were to watch the young goats hung
From toppling crags, cropping the tender shoot,
While in thick pleachèd shade the shepherd sung
His uncouth rural lay and woke his flute ;
To mark, mid dewy grass, red apples flung,
And every bough thick set with ripening fruit,
The butting rams, kine lowing o'er the lea,
And cornfields waving like the windy sea.

Lo ! how the rugged master of the herd
Before his flock unbars the wattled cote ;
Then with his rod and many a rustic word
He rules their going : or 'tis sweet to note
The delver, when his toothèd rake hath stirred
The stubborn clod, his hoe the glebe hath smote ;
Barefoot the country girl, with loosened zone,
Spins, while she keeps her geese neath yonder stone.

After such happy wise, in ancient years,
Dwelt the old nations in the age of gold ;
Nor had the fount been stirred of mothers' tears
For sons in war's fell labour stark and cold ;
Nor trusted they to ships the wild wind steers,
Nor yet had oxen groaning ploughed the wold ;
Their houses were huge oaks, whose trunks had store
Of honey, and whose boughs thick acorns bore.

Nor yet, in that glad time, the accursèd thirst
Of cruel gold had fallen on this fair earth :
Joyous in liberty they lived at first ;
Unploughed the fields sent forth their teeming birth ;

Till fortune, envious of such concord, burst
 The bond of law, and pity banned and worth ;
 Within their breasts sprang luxury and that rage
 Which men call love in our degenerate age.

We need not be reminded that these stanzas are almost a cento from Virgil, Hesiod, and Ovid. The merits of the translator, adapter, and combiner, who knew so well how to cull their beauties and adorn them with a perfect dress of modern diction, are so eminent that we cannot deny him the title of a great poet. It is always in picture-painting more than in dramatic presentation that Poliziano excels. Here is a bas-relief of Venus rising from the Ocean foam :—

Stanzas 99—107.

In Thetis' lap, upon the vexed Egean,
 The seed deific from Olympus sown,
 Beneath dim stars and cycling empyrean
 Drifts like white foam across the salt waves blown ;
 Thence, born at last by movements hymenean,
 Rises a maid more fair than man hath known ;
 Upon her shell the wanton breezes waft her ;
 She nears the shore, while heaven looks down with laughter.

Seeing the carved work you would cry that real
 Were shell and sea, and real the winds that blow ;
 The lightning of the goddess' eyes you feel,
 The smiling heavens, the elemental glow :
 White-vested Hours across the smooth sands steal,
 With loosened curls that to the breezes flow ;
 Like, yet unlike, are all their beauteous faces,
 E'en as befits a choir of sister Graces.

Well might you swear that on those waves were riding
 The goddess with her right hand on her hair,
 And with the other the sweet apple hiding ;
 And that beneath her feet, divinely fair,
 Fresh flowers sprang forth, the barren sands dividing ;
 Then that, with glad smiles and enticements rare,
 The three nymphs round their queen, embosoming her,
 Threw the starred mantle soft as gossamer.

The one, with hands above her head upraised,
 Upon her dewy tresses fits a wreath,
 With ruddy gold and orient gems emblazed ;
 The second hangs pure pearls her ears beneath ;
 The third round shoulders white and breast hath placed
 Such wealth of gleaming carcanets as sheathe
 Their own fair bosoms, when the Graces sing
 Among the gods with dance and carolling.

Thence might you see them rising toward the spheres,
 Seated upon a cloud of silvery white ;
 The trembling of the cloven air appears
 Wrought in the stone, and heaven serenely bright ;
 The gods drink in with open eyes and ears
 Her beauty, and desire her bed's delight ;
 Each seems to marvel with a mute amaze—
 Their brows and foreheads wrinkle as they gaze.

The next quotation shows Venus in the lap of Mars, and visited by Cupid :—

Stanzas 122—124.

Stretched on a couch, outside the coverlid,
 Love found her, scarce unloosed from Mars' embrace ;
 He, lying back within her bosom, fed
 His eager eyes on nought but her fair face ;
 Roses above them like a cloud were shed,
 To reinforce them in the amorous chace ;
 While Venus, quick with longings unsuppressed,
 A thousand times his eyes and forehead kissed.

Above, around, young Loves on every side
 Played naked, darting birdlike to and fro ;
 And one, whose plumes a thousand colours dyed,
 Fanned the shed roses as they lay arow ;
 One filled his quiver with fresh flowers, and hied
 To pour them on the couch that lay below ;
 Another, poised upon his pinions, through
 The falling shower soared shaking rosy dew :

For, as he quivered with his tremulous wing,
 The wandering roses in their drift were stayed ;—
 Thus none was weary of glad gambolling ;
 Till Cupid came, with dazzling plumes displayed,

Breathless ; and round his mother's neck did fling
 His languid arms, and with his winnowing made
 Her heart burn :—very glad and bright of face,
 But, with his flight, too tired to speak apace.

These pictures have in them the very glow of Italian painting. Sometimes we seem to see a quaint design of Piero di Cosimo, with bright tints and multitudinous small figures in a spacious landscape. Sometimes it is the languid grace of Botticelli, whose soul became possessed of classic inspiration as it were in dreams, and who has painted the birth of Venus almost exactly as Poliziano imagined it. Again, we seize the broader beauties of the Venetian masters, or the vehemence of Giulio Romano's pencil. To the last class belong the two next extracts :—

Stanzas 104—107.

In the last square the great artificer
 Had wrought himself crowned with Love's perfect palm ;
 Black from his forge and rough, he runs to her,
 Leaving all labour for her bosom's calm :
 Lips joined to lips with deep love-longing stir
 Fire in his heart, and in his spirit balm ;
 Far fiercer flames through breast and marrow fly
 Than those which heat his forge in Sicily.

Jove, on the other side, becomes a bull,
 Goodly and white, at Love's behest, and rears
 His neck beneath his rich freight beautiful :
 She turns toward the shore that disappears,
 With frightened gesture ; and the wonderful
 Gold curls about her bosom and her ears
 Float in the wind ; her veil waves, backward borne ;
 This hand still clasps his back, and that his horn.

With naked feet close-tucked beneath her dress,
 She seems to fear the sea that dares not rise :
 So, imaged in a shape of drear distress,
 In vain unto her comrades sweet she cries ;
 They left amid the meadow-flowers, no less
 For lost Europa wail with weeping eyes :
 Europa, sounds the shore, bring back our bliss !
 But the bull swims and turns her feet to kiss.

Here Jove is made a swan, a golden shower,
 Or seems a serpent, or a shepherd-swain,
 To work his amorous will in secret hour ;
 Here, like an eagle, soars he o'er the plain,
 Love-led, and bears his Ganymede, the flower
 Of beauty, mid celestial peers to reign ;
 The boy with cypress hath his fair locks crowned,
 Naked, with ivy wreathed his waist around.

Stanzas 110—112.

Lo ! here again fair Ariadne lies,
 And to the deaf winds of false Theseus plains,
 And of the air and slumber's treacheries ;
 Trembling with fear even as a reed that strains
 And quivers by the mere neathe breezy skies :
 Her very speechless attitude complains—
 No beast there is so cruel as thou art,
 No beast less loyal to my broken heart.

Throned on a car, with ivy crowned and vine,
 Rides Bacchus, by two champing tigers driven :
 Around him on the sand deep-soaked with brine
 Satyrs and Bacchantes rush ; the skies are riven
 With shouts and laughter ; Fauns quaff bubbling wine
 From horns and cymbals ; Nymphs, to madness driven,
 Trip, skip, and stumble ; mixed in wild enlacements,
 Laughing they roll or meet for glad embracaments.

Upon his ass Silenus, never sated,
 With thick, black veins, wherethrough the must is soaking,
 Nods his dull forehead with deep sleep belated ;
 His eyes are wine-inflamed, and red, and smoking :
 Bold Mænads goad the ass so sorely weighted,
 With stinging thyrsi ; he sways feebly poking
 The mane with bloated fingers ; Fauns behind him,
 E'en as he falls, upon the crupper bind him.

We almost seem to be looking at the frescoes in some Trasteverine palace, or at the canvas of one of the sensual Genoese painters. The description of the garden of Venus has the charm of somewhat artificial elegance, the exotic grace of style, which attracts us in the earlier Renaissance work :—

The leafy tresses of that timeless garden
 Nor fragile brine nor fresh snow dares to whiten ;
 Frore winter never comes the rills to harden,
 Nor winds the tender shrubs and herbs to frighten ;
 Glad Spring is always here, a laughing warden ;
 Nor do the seasons wane, but ever brighten ;
 Here to the breeze young May, her curls unbinding,
 With thousand flowers her wreath is ever winding.

Indeed it may be said with truth that Poliziano's most eminent faculty as a descriptive poet corresponded exactly to the genius of the painters of his day. To produce pictures radiant with Renaissance colouring, and vigorous with Renaissance passion, was the function of his art, not to express profound thought or dramatic situations. This remark might be extended with justice to Ariosto, and Tasso, and Boiardo. The great narrative poets of the Renaissance in Italy were not dramatists ; nor were their poems epics : their forte lay in the inexhaustible variety and beauty of their pictures.

Of Poliziano's plagiarism—if this be the right word to apply to the process of assimilation and selection, by means of which the poet-scholar of Florence taught the Italians how to use the riches of the ancient languages and their own literature—here are some specimens. In stanza 42 of the ‘Giostra’ he says of Simonetta :—

E 'n lei discerne un non so che divino.

Dante has the line :—

Vostri risplende un non so che divino.

In the 44th he speaks about the birds :—

E canta ogni augelletto in suo latino.

This comes from Cavalcanti's :—

E cantinne gli augelli
 Ciascuno in suo latino.

Stanza 45 is taken bodily from Claudian, Dante, and Cavalcanti. It would seem as though Poliziano wished to show that the classic and mediæval literature of Italy was all one, and that a poet of the Renaissance could carry on the continuous tradition in his own style. A line in stanza 54 seems perfectly original :—

E già dall' alte ville il fumo esala.

It comes straight from Virgil :—

Et jam summa procul villarum culmina fumant.

In the next stanza the line—

Tal che 'l ciel tutto rasserenò d' intorno,

is Petrarch's. So in the 56th, is the phrase 'il dolce andar celeste.' In stanza 57,—

Far che 'l cor del petto se gli schianti,

belongs to Boccaccio. In stanza 60 the first line :—

La notte che le cose ci nasconde,

together with its rhyme, 'sotto le amate fronde,' is borrowed from the 23rd canto of the Paradiso. In the second line, 'Stellato ammanto,' is Claudian's 'stellantes sinus' applied to the heaven. When we reach the garden of Venus we find whole passages translated from Claudian's 'Marriage of Honorius,' and from the 'Metamorphoses of Ovid.'

Poliziano's second poem of importance, which indeed may historically be said to take precedence of 'La Giostra,' was the so-called tragedy of 'Orfeo.' The English version of this lyrical drama must be reserved for a separate study: yet it belongs to the subject of this, inasmuch as the 'Orfeo' is a classical legend treated in a form already familiar to the Italian people. Nearly all the popular kinds of poetry of which specimens have been translated in this chapter, will be found combined in its six short scenes.

ORFEO.

THE 'Orfeo' of Messer Angelo Poliziano ranks amongst the most important poems of the fifteenth century. It was composed at Mantua in the short space of two days, on the occasion of Cardinal Francesco Gonzaga's visit to his native town in 1472. But, though so hastily put together, the 'Orfeo' marks an epoch in the evolution of Italian poetry. It is the earliest example of a secular drama, containing within the compass of its brief scenes the germ of the opera, the tragedy, and the pastoral play. In form it does not greatly differ from the 'Sacre Rappresentazioni' of the fifteenth century, as those miracle plays were handled by popular poets of the earlier Renaissance. But while the traditional octave stanza is used for the main movement of the piece, Poliziano has introduced episodes of *terza rima*, madrigals, a carnival song, a *ballata*, and, above all, choral passages which have in them the future melodrama of the musical Italian stage. The lyrical treatment of the fable, its capacity for brilliant and varied scenic effects, its combination of singing with action, and the whole artistic keeping of the piece, which never passes into genuine tragedy, but stays within the limits of romantic pathos, distinguish the 'Orfeo' as a typical production of Italian genius. Thus, though little better than an improvisation, it combines the many forms of verse developed by the Tuscans at the close of the Middle

Ages, and fixes the limits beyond which their dramatic poets, with a few exceptions, were not destined to advance. Nor was the choice of the fable without significance. Quitting the Bible stories and the Legends of Saints, which supplied the mediæval playwright with material. Poliziano selects a classic story : and this story might pass for an allegory of Italy, whose intellectual development the scholar-poet ruled. Orpheus is the power of poetry and art, softening stubborn nature, civilising men, and prevailing over Hades for a season. He is the right hero of humanism, the genius of the Renaissance, the tutelary god of Italy, who thought she could resist the laws of fate by verse and elegant accomplishments. To press this kind of allegory is unwise ; for at a certain moment it breaks in our hands. And yet in Eurydice the fancy might discover Freedom, the true spouse of poetry and art ; Orfeo's last resolve too vividly depicts the vice of the Renaissance ; and the Mænads are those barbarous armies destined to lay waste the plains of Italy, inebriate with wine and blood, obeying a new lord of life on whom the poet's harp exerts no charm. But a truce to this spinning of pedantic cobwebs. Let Mercury appear, and let the play begin.

THE FABLE OF ORPHEUS.

MERCURY announces the show.

Ho, silence ! Listen ! There was once a hind,
Son of Apollo, Aristaeus hight,
Who loved with so untamed and fierce a mind
Eurydice, the wife of Orpheus wight,
That chasing her one day with will unkind
He wrought her cruel death in love's despite ;
For, as she fled toward the mere hard by,
A serpent stung her, and she had to die.

Now Orpheus, singing, brought her back from hell,
 But could not keep the law the fates ordain :
 Poor wretch, he backward turned and broke the spell ;
 So that once more from him his love was ta'en.
 Therefore he would no more with women dwell,
 And in the end by women he was slain.

Enter A SHEPHERD, who says—

Nay, listen, friends ! Fair auspices are given,
 Since Mercury to earth hath come from heaven.

SCENE I.

MOPSUS, *an old shepherd.*

Say, hast thou seen a calf of mine, all white
 Save for a spot of black upon her front,
 Two feet, one flank, and one knee ruddy-bright ?

ARISTAEUS, *a young shepherd.*

Friend Mopsus, to the margin of this fount
 No herds have come to drink since break of day ;
 Yet may'st thou hear them low on yonder mount.
 Go, Thyrsis, search the upland lawn, I pray !
 Thou Mopsus shalt with me the while abide ;
 For I would have thee listen to my lay. [Exit THYRSIS.
 'Twas yester morn where trees yon cavern hide,
 I saw a nymph more fair than Dian, who
 Had a young lusty lover at her side :
 But when that more than woman met my view,
 The heart within my bosom leapt outright,
 And straight the madness of wild Love I knew.
 Since then, dear Mopsus, I have no delight ;
 But weep and weep : of food and drink I tire,
 And without slumber pass the weary night.

MOPSUS.

Friend Aristaeus, if this amorous fire
 Thou dost not seek to quench as best may be,
 Thy peace of soul will vanish in desire.

Thou know'st that love is no new thing to me :
 I've proved how love grown old brings bitter pain :
 Cure it at once, or hope no remedy ;
 For if thou find thee in Love's cruel chain,
 Thy bees, thy blossoms will be out of mind,
 Thy fields, thy vines, thy flocks, thy cotes, thy grain.

ARISTAEUS.

Mopsus, thou speakest to the deaf and blind :
 Waste not on me these wingèd words, I pray,
 Lest they be scattered to the inconstant wind.
 I love, and cannot wish to say love nay ;
 Nor seek to cure so charming a disease :
 They praise Love best who most against him say.
 Yet if thou fain wouldest give my heart some ease,
 Forth from thy wallet take thy pipe, and we
 Will sing awhile beneath the leafy trees ;
 For well my nymph is pleased with melody.

THE SONG.

Listen, ye wild woods, to my roundelay ;
 Since the fair nymph will hear not, though I pray.

The lovely nymph is deaf to my lament,
 Nor heeds the music of this rustic reed ;
 Wherefore my flocks and herds are ill content,
 Nor bathe their hoof where grows the water weed,
 Nor touch the tender herbage on the mead ;
 So sad, because their shepherd grieves, are they.

Listen, ye wild woods, to my roundelay ;
 Since the fair nymph will hear not, though I pray.

The herds are sorry for their master's moan ;
 The nymph heeds not her lover though he die,
 The lovely nymph, whose heart is made of stone—
 Nay steel, nay adamant ! She still doth fly
 Far, far before me, when she sees me nigh,
 Even as a lamb flies from the wolf away.

Listen, ye wild woods to my roundelay ;
 Since the fair nymph will hear not, though I pray.

Nay, tell her, pipe of mine, how swift doth flee
 Beauty together with our years amain ;

Tell her how time destroys all rarity,
 Nor youth once lost can be renewed again ;
 Tell her to use the gifts that yet remain :
 Roses and violets blossom not alway.

Listen, ye wild woods, to my roundelay ;
 Since the fair nymph will hear not, though I pray.

Carry, ye winds, these sweet words to her ears,
 Unto the ears of my loved nymph, and tell
 How many tears I shed, what bitter tears !
 Beg her to pity one who loves so well :
 Say that my life is frail and mutable,
 And melts like rime before the rising day.

Listen, ye wild woods, to my roundelay ;
 Since the fair nymph will hear not, though I pray.

MOPSUS.

Less sweet, methinks the voice of waters falling
 From cliffs that echo back their murmurous song ;
 Less sweet the summer sound of breezes calling
 Through pine-tree tops sonorous all day long ;
 Than are thy rhymes, the soul of grief entralling,
 Thy rhymes o'er field and forest borne along :
 If she but hear them, at thy feet she'll fawn.—
 Lo, Thyrsis, hurrying homeward from the lawn !

[Re-enters THYRSIS.]

ARISTAEUS.

What of the calf ? Say, hast thou seen her now ?

THYRSIS, *the cowherd.*

I have, and I'd as lief her throat were cut !
 She almost ripped my bowels up, I vow,
 Running amuck with horns well set to butt :
 Nathless I've locked her in the stall below :
 She's blown with grass, I tell you, saucy slut !

ARISTAEUS.

Now, prithee, let me hear what made you stay
 So long upon the upland lawns away ?

THYRSIS.

Walking, I spied a gentle maiden there,
 Who plucked wild flowers upon the mountain side :
 I scarcely think that Venus is more fair,
 Of sweeter grace, most modest in her pride :
 She speaks, she sings, with voice so soft and rare,
 That listening streams would backward roll their tide :
 Her face is snow and roses ; gold her head ;
 All, all alone she goes, white-raimented.

ARISTAEUS.

Stay, Mopsus ! I must follow : for 'tis she
 Of whom I lately spoke. So, friend, farewell !

MOPSUS.

Hold, Aristaeus, lest for her or thee
 Thy boldness be the cause of mischief fell !

ARISTAEUS.

Nay, death this day must be my destiny,
 Unless I try my fate and break the spell.
 Stay therefore, Mopsus, by the fountain stay !
 I'll follow her, meanwhile, yon mountain way.

[*Exit* ARISTAEUS.]

MOPSUS.

Thyrsis, what thinkest thou of thy loved lord ?
 See'st thou that all his senses are distraught ?
 Couldst thou not speak some seasonable word,
 Tell him what shame this idle love hath wrought ?

THYRSIS.

Free speech and servitude but ill accord,
 Friend Mopsus, and the hind is folly-fraught
 Who rates his lord ! He's wiser far than I.
 To tend these kine is all my mastery.

SCENE II.

ARISTAEUS, *in pursuit of EURYDICE.*

Flee not from me, maiden !
 Lo, I am thy friend !
 Dearer far than life I hold thee.
 List, thou beauty-laden,

To these prayers attend :
 Flee not, let my arms enfold thee !
 Neither wolf nor bear will grasp thee :
 That I am thy friend I've told thee :
 Stay thy course then ; let me clasp thee !—
 Since thou 'rt deaf and wilt not heed me,
 Since thou 'rt still before me flying,
 While I follow panting, dying,
 Lend me wings, Love, wings to speed me !

[*Exit ARISTAEUS, pursuing EURYDICE.*

SCENE III.

A DRYAD.

Sad news of lamentation and of pain,
 Dear sisters, hath my voice to bear to you :
 I scarcely dare to raise the dolorous strain.
 Eurydice by yonder stream lies low ;
 The flowers are fading round her stricken head,
 And the complaining waters weep their woe.
 The stranger soul from that fair house hath fled ;
 And she, like privet pale, or white May-bloom
 Untimely plucked, lies on the meadow, dead.
 Hear then the cause of her disastrous doom !
 A snake stole forth and stung her suddenly.
 I am so burdened with this weight of gloom
 That, lo, I bid you all come weep with me !

CHORUS OF DRYADS.

Let the wide air with our complaint resound !
 For all heaven's light is spent.
 Let rivers break their bound,
 Swollen with tears outpoured from our lament !
 Fell death hath ta'en their splendour from the skies :
 The stars are sunk in gloom.
 Stern death hath plucked the bloom
 Of nymphs :—Eurydice down-trodden lies.
 Weep, Love ! The woodland cries.
 Weep, groves and founts ;
 Ye craggy mounts ; you leafy dell,
 Beneath whose boughs she fell,
 Bend every branch in time with this sad sound.

Let the wide air with our complaint resound !

Ah, fortune pitiless ! Ah, cruel snake !

Ah, luckless doom of woes !

Like a cropped summer rose,

Or lily cut, she withers on the brake.

Her face, which once did make

Our age so bright

With beauty's light, is faint and pale ;

And the clear lamp doth fail,

Which shed pure splendour all the world around.

Let the wide air with our complaint resound !

Who e'er will sing so sweetly, now she's gone ?

Her gentle voice to hear,

The wild winds dared not stir ;

And now they breathe but sorrow, moan for moan :

So many joys are flown,

Such jocund days

Doth Death erase with her sweet eyes !

Bid earth's lament arise,

And make our dirge through heaven and sea rebound !

Let the wide air with our complaint resound !

A DRYAD.

'Tis surely Orpheus, who hath reached the hill,

With harp in hand, glad-eyed and light of heart !

He thinks that his dear love is living still.

My news will stab him with a sudden smart :

An unforeseen and unexpected blow

Wounds worst and stings the bosom's tenderest part.

Death hath disjoined the truest love, I know,

That nature yet to this low world revealed,

And quenched the flame in its most charming glow.

Go, sisters, hasten ye to yonder field,

Where on the sward lies slain Eurydice ;

Strew her with flowers and grasses ! I must yield

This man the measure of his misery.

[*Exeunt DRYADS. Enter ORPHEUS, singing.*

ORPHEUS.

Musa, triumphales titulos et gesta canamus

Herculis, et forti monstra subacta manu;

Ut timidae matri pressos ostenderit angues,

Intrepidusque fero riserit ore puer.

A DRYAD.

Orpheus, I bring thee bitter news. Alas !
 Thy nymph who was so beautiful, is slain !
 Flying from Aristaeus o'er the grass,
 What time she reached yon stream that threads the plain,
 A snake which lurked mid flowers where she did pass,
 Pierced her fair foot with his envenomed bane :
 So fierce, so potent was the sting, that she
 Died in mid course. Ah, woe that this should be !

[ORPHEUS turns to go in silence.

MNESILLUS, *the satyr.*

Mark ye how sunk in woe
 The poor wretch forth doth pass,
 And may not answer, for his grief, one word ?
 On some lone shore, unheard,
 Far, far away, he'll go,
 And pour his heart forth to the winds, alas !
 I'll follow and observe if he
 Moves with his moan the hills to sympathy.

[Follows ORPHEUS.

ORPHEUS.

Let us lament, O lyre disconsolate !
 Our wonted music is in tune no more.
 Lament we while the heavens revolve, and let
 The nightingale be conquered on Love's shore !
 O heaven, O earth, O sea, O cruel fate !
 How shall I bear a pang so passing sore ?
 Eurydice, my love ! O life of mine !
 On earth I will no more without thee pine !
 I will go down unto the doors of hell,
 And see if mercy may be found below :
 Perchance we shall reverse fate's spoken spell
 With tearful songs and words of honeyed woe :
 Perchance will Death be pitiful ; for well
 With singing have we turned the streams that flow ;
 Moved stones, together hind and tiger drawn,
 And made trees dance upon the forest lawn.

[Passes from sight on his way to Hades.

MNESILLUS.

The staff of Fate is strong
 And will not lightly bend,

Nor yet the stubborn gates of steely Hell.
 Nay, I can see full well
 His life will not be long :
 Those downward feet no more will earthward wend.
 What marvel if they lose the light,
 Who make blind Love their guide by day and night !

SCENE IV.

ORPHEUS, at the gate of Hell.

Pity, nay pity for a lover's moan !
 Ye Powers of Hell, let pity reign in you !
 To your dark regions led me Love alone :
 Downward upon his wings of light I flew.
 Hush, Cerberus ! Howl not by Pluto's throne !
 For when you hear my tale of misery, you,
 Nor you alone, but all who here abide
 In this blind world, will weep by Lethe's tide.
 There is no need, ye Furies, thus to rage ;
 To dart those snakes that in your tresses twine :
 Knew ye the cause of this my pilgrimage,
 Ye would lie down and join your moans with mine.
 Let this poor wretch but pass, who war doth wage
 With heaven, the elements, the powers divine !
 I beg for pity or for death. No more !
 But open, ope Hell's adamantine door !

[*ORPHEUS enters Hell.*

PLUTO.

What man is he who with his golden lyre
 Hath moved the gates that never move,
 While the dead folk repeat his dirge of love ?
 The rolling stone no more doth tire
 Swart Sisyphus on yonder hill ;
 And Tantalus with water slakes his fire :
 The groans of mangled Tityos are still ;
 Ixion's wheel forgets to fly ;
 The Danaids their urns can fill :
 I hear no more the tortured spirits cry ;
 But all find rest in that sweet harmony.

PROSERPINE.

Dear consort, since, compelled by love of thee,
 I left the light of heaven serene,
 And came to reign in hell, a sombre queen ;
 The charm of tenderest sympathy
 Hath never yet had power to turn
 My stubborn heart, or draw forth tears from me.
 Now with desire for yon sweet voice I yearn ;
 Nor is there aught so dear
 As that delight. Nay, be not stern
 To this one prayer ! Relax thy brows severe,
 And rest awhile with me that song to hear !

[ORPHEUS stands before the throne.

ORPHEUS.

Ye rulers of the people lost in gloom,
 Who see no more the jocund light of day !
 Ye who inherit all things that the womb
 Of Nature and the elements display !
 Hear ye the grief that draws me to the tomb !
 Love, cruel Love, hath led me on this way :
 Not to chain Cerberus I hither come,
 But to bring back my mistress to her home.
 A serpent hidden among flowers and leaves
 Stole my fair mistress—nay, my heart—from me :
 Wherefore my wounded life for ever grieves,
 Nor can I stand against this agony.
 Still, if some fragrance lingers yet and cleaves
 Of your famed love unto your memory,
 If of that ancient rape you think at all,
 Give back Eurydice !—On you I call.
 All things ere long unto this bourne descend :
 All mortal lives to you return at last :
 Whate'er the moon hath circled, in the end
 Must fade and perish in your empire vast :
 Some sooner and some later hither wend ;
 Yet all upon this pathway shall have passed :
 This of our footsteps is the final goal ;
 And then we dwell for aye in your control.
 Therefore the nymph I love is left for you
 When nature leads her deathward in due time :
 But now you've cropped the tendrils as they grew,
 The grapes unripe, while yet the sap did climb :

Who reaps the young blades wet with April dew,
 Nor waits till summer hath o'erpassed her prime ?
 Give back, give back my hope one little day !—
 Not for a gift, but for a loan I pray.

I pray not to you by the waves forlorn
 Of marshy Styx or dismal Acheron,
 By Chaos where the mighty world was born,
 Or by the sounding flames of Phlegethon ;
 But by the fruit which charmed thee on that morn
 When thou didst leave our world for this dread throne !
 O queen ! if thou reject this pleading breath,
 I will no more return, but ask for death !

PROSERPINE.

Husband, I never guessed
 That in our realm oppressed
 Pity could find a home to dwell :
 But now I know that mercy teems in hell.
 I see Death weep ; her breast
 Is shaken by those tears that faultless fell.
 Let then thy laws severe for him be swayed
 By love, by song, by the just prayers he prayed !

PLUTO.

She's thine, but at this price :
 Bend not on her thine eyes,
 Till mid the souls that live she stay.
 See that thou turn not back upon the way !
 Check all fond thoughts that rise !
 Else will thy love be torn from thee away.
 I am well pleased that song so rare as thine
 The might of my dread sceptre should incline.

SCENE V.

ORPHEUS, *sings.*

*Ite triumphales circum mea tempora lauri.
 Vicimus Eurydicen : redditia vita mihi est.
 Haec mea praecipue victoria digna coronâ.
 Credimus ? an lateri juncta puella meo ?*

EURYDICE.

Ah me ! Thy love too great
 Hath lost not thee alone !
 I am torn from thee by strong Fate.
 No more I am thine own.
 In vain I stretch these arms. Back, back to Hell
 I'm drawn, I'm drawn. My Orpheus, fare thee well !

[EURYDICE disappears.]

ORPHEUS.

Who hath laid laws on Love ?
 Will pity not be given
 For one short look so full thereof ?
 Since I am robbed of heaven,
 Since all my joy so great is turned to pain,
 I will go back and plead with Death again !

[TISIPHONE blocks his way.]

TISIPHONE.

Nay, seek not back to turn !
 Vain is thy weeping, all thy words are vain.
 Eurydice may not complain
 Of aught but thee—albeit her grief is great.
 Vain are thy verses 'gainst the voice of Fate !
 How vain thy song ! For Death is stern !
 Try not the backward path : thy feet refrain !
 The laws of the abyss are fixed and firm remain.

SCENE VI.

ORPHEUS.

What sorrow-laden song shall e'er be found
 To match the burden of my matchless woe ?
 How shall I make the fount of tears abound,
 To weep apace with grief's unmeasured flow ?
 Salt tears I'll waste upon the barren ground,
 So long as life delays me here below ;
 And since my fate hath wrought me wrong so sore,
 I swear I'll never love a woman more !
 Henceforth I'll pluck the buds of opening spring,
 The bloom of youth when life is loveliest,
 Ere years have spoiled the beauty which they bring :

This love, I swear, is sweetest, softest, best !
 Of female charms let no one speak or sing ;
 Since she is slain who ruled within my breast.
 He who would seek my converse, let him see
 That ne'er he talk of woman's love to me !

How pitiful is he who changes mind
 For woman ! for her love laments or grieves !
 Who suffers her in chains his will to bind,
 Or trusts her words lighter than withered leaves,
 Her loving looks more treacherous than the wind !
 A thousand times she veers ; to nothing cleaves :
 Follows who flies ; from him who follows, flees ;
 And comes and goes like waves on stormy seas !

High Jove confirms the truth of what I said,
 Who, caught and bound in love's delightful snare,
 Enjoys in heaven his own bright Ganymed :
 Phoebus on earth had Hyacinth the fair :
 Hercules, conqueror of the world, was led
 Captive to Hylas by this love so rare.—
 Advice for husbands ! Seek divorce, and fly
 Far, far away from female company !

[Enter a MAENAD leading a train of BACCHANTES.

A MAENAD.

Ho ! Sisters ! Up ! Alive !
 See him who doth our sex deride !
 Hunt him to death, the slave !
 Thou snatch the thyrsus ! Thou this oak-tree rive !
 Cast down this doeskin and that hide !
 We'll wreak our fury on the knave !
 Yea, he shall feel our wrath, the knave !
 He shall yield up his hide
 Torn as woodmen pine-trees rive !
 No power his life can save ;
 Since women he hath dared deride !
 Ho ! To him, sisters ! Ho ! Alive !

[ORPHEUS is chased off the scene and slain: the MAENADS
 then return.

A MAENAD.

Ho ! Bacchus ! Ho ! I yield thee thanks for this !
 Through all the woodland we the wretch have borne :
 So that each root is slaked with blood of his :
 Yea, limb from limb his body have we torn

Through the wild forest with a fearful bliss :
 His gore hath bathed the earth by ash and thorn !—
 Go then ! thy blame on lawful wedlock fling !
 Ho ! Bacchus ! Take the victim that we bring !

CHORUS OF MAENADS.

Bacchus ! we all must follow thee !
 Bacchus ! Bacchus ! Ohé ! Ohé !
 With ivy coronals, bunch and berry,
 Crown we our heads to worship thee !
 Thou hast bidden us to make merry
 Day and night with jollity !
 Drink then ! Bacchus is here ! Drink free,
 And hand ye the drinking-cup to me !
 Bacchus ! we all must follow thee !
 Bacchus ! Bacchus ! Ohé ! Ohé !
 See, I have emptied my horn already :
 Stretch hither your beaker to me, I pray :
 Are the hills and the lawns where we roam unsteady ?
 Or is it my brain that reels away ?
 Let every one run to and fro through the hay,
 As ye see me run ! Ho ! after me !
 Bacchus ! we all must follow thee !
 Bacchus ! Bacchus ! Ohé ! Ohé !
 Methinks I am dropping in swoon or slumber :
 Am I drunken or sober, yes or no ?
 What are these weights my feet encumber ?
 You too are tipsy, well I know !
 Let every one do as ye see me do,
 Let every one drink and quaff like me !
 Bacchus ! we all must follow thee !
 Bacchus ! Bacchus ! Ohé ! Ohé !
 Cry Bacchus ! Cry Bacchus ! Be blithe and merry,
 Tossing wine down your throats away !
 Let sleep then come and our gladness bury :
 Drink you, and you, and you, while ye may !
 Dancing is over for me to-day.
 Let everyone cry aloud Evohé !
 Bacchus ! we all must follow thee !
 Bacchus ! Bacchus ! Ohé ! Ohé !

Though an English translation can do little toward rendering the facile graces of Poliziano's style, that 'roseate fluency'

for which it has been praised by his Italian admirers, the main qualities of the 'Orfeo' as a composition may be traced in this rough copy. Of dramatic power, of that mastery over the deeper springs of human nature which distinguished the first effort of the English muse in Marlowe's plays, there is but little. A certain adaptation of the language to the characters, as in the rudeness of Thyrsis when contrasted with the rustic elegance of Aristæus, a touch of simple feeling in Eurydice's lyrical outcry of farewell, a discrimination between the tender sympathy of Proserpine and Pluto's stern relenting, a spirited presentation of the Bacchanalian *furore* in the Mænads, an attempt to model the Satyr Mnesillus as apart from human nature and yet sympathetic to its anguish, these points constitute the chief dramatic features of the melodrama. Orpheus himself is a purely lyrical personage. Of character, he can scarcely be said to have anything marked ; and his part rises to its height precisely in that passage where the lyrist has to be displayed. Before the gates of Hades and the throne of Proserpine he sings, and his singing is the right outpouring of a poet's soul ; each octave resumes the theme of the last stanza with a swell of utterance, a crescendo of intonation that recalls the passionate and unpremeditated descant of a bird upon the boughs alone. To this true quality of music is added the persuasiveness of pleading. That the violin melody of his incomparable song is lost, must be reckoned a great misfortune. We have good reason to believe that the part of Orpheus was taken by Messer Baccio Ugolini, singing to the viol. Here too it may be mentioned that a *tondo* in monochrome, painted by Signorelli among the arabesques at Orvieto, shows Orpheus at the throne of Pluto, habited as a poet with the laurel crown and playing on a violin of antique form. It would be interesting to know whether a rumour of the Mantuan pageant had reached the ears of the Cortonese painter.

If the whole of the 'Orfeo' had been conceived and executed

with the same artistic feeling as the chief act, it would have been a really fine poem independently of its historical interest. But we have only to turn the page and read the lament uttered for the loss of Euridice, in order to perceive Poliziano's incapacity for dealing with his hero in a situation of greater difficulty. The pathos which might have made us sympathise with Orpheus in his misery, the passion, approaching to madness, which might have justified his misogyny, are absent. It is difficult not to feel that in this climax of his anguish he was a poor creature, and that the Mænads served him right. Nothing illustrates the defect of real dramatic imagination better than this failure to dignify the catastrophe. Gifted with a fine lyrical inspiration, Poliziano seems to have already felt the Bacchic chorus which forms so brilliant a termination to his play, and to have forgotten his duty to the unfortunate Orpheus, whose sorrow for Eurydice is stultified and made unmeaning by the prosaic expression of a base resolve. It may indeed be said in general that the '*Orfeo*' is a good poem only where the situation is not so much dramatic as lyrical, and that its finest passage—the scene in Hades—was fortunately for its author one in which the dramatic motive had to be lyrically expressed. In this respect, as in many others, the '*Orfeo*' combines the faults and merits of the Italian attempts at melo-tragedy. To break a butterfly upon the wheel is, however, no fit function of criticism : and probably no one would have smiled more than the author of this improvisation, at the thought of its being gravely dissected just four hundred years after the occasion it was meant to serve had long been given over to oblivion.¹

¹ For the text of the '*Orfeo*' and for my method of dealing with it, see Appendix.

CANOSSA.

ITALY is less the land of what is venerable in antiquity, than of beauty, by divine right young eternally in spite of age. This is due partly to her history and art and literature, partly to the temper of the races who have made her what she is, and partly to her natural advantages. Her oldest architectural remains, the temples of Pæstum and Girgenti, or the gates of Perugia and Volterra, are so adapted to Italian landscape and so graceful in their massive strength, that we forget the centuries which have passed over them. We leap as by a single bound from the times of Roman greatness to the new birth of humanity in the fourteenth century, forgetting the many years during which Italy, like the rest of Europe, was buried in what our ancestors called Gothic barbarism. The illumination cast upon the classic period by the literature of Rome and by the memory of her great men is so vivid, that we feel the days of the Republic and the Empire to be near us ; while the Italian Renaissance is so truly a revival of that former splendour, a resumption of the music interrupted for a season, that it is extremely difficult to form any conception of the five long centuries which elapsed between the Lombard invasion in 568 and the accession of Hildebrand to the Pontificate in 1073. So true is it that nothing lives and has reality for us but what is spiritual, intellectual, self-possessed in personality and consciousness. When the Egyptian priest said to Solon, ‘ You Greeks are always children,’ he intended a gentle sarcasm, but he implied a compliment ; for the quality of imperishable youth belonged to the Hellenic spirit, and has become the heritage of every

race which partook of it. And this spirit in no common degree has been shared by the Italians of the earlier and the later classic epoch. The land is full of monuments pertaining to those two brilliant periods ; and whenever the voice of poet has spoken or the hand of artist has been at work, that spirit, as distinguished from the spirit of mediævalism, has found expression.

Yet it must be remembered that during the five centuries above mentioned Italy was given over to Lombards, Franks, and Germans. Feudal institutions, alien to the social and political ideals of the classic world, took a tolerably firm hold on the country. The Latin element remained silent, passive, in abeyance, undergoing an important transformation. It was in the course of those five hundred years that the Italians as a modern people, separable from their Roman ancestors, were formed. At the close of this obscure passage in Italian history, their communes, the foundation of Italy's future independence, and the source of her peculiar national development, appeared in all the vigour and audacity of youth. At its close the Italian genius presented Europe with its greatest triumph of constructive ability, the Papacy. At its close again the series of supreme artistic achievements, starting with the architecture of churches and public palaces, passing on to sculpture and painting, and culminating in music, which only ended with the temporary extinction of national vitality in the seventeenth century, was simultaneously begun in all the provinces of the peninsula.

So important were these five centuries of incubation for Italy, and so little is there left of them to arrest the attention of the student, dazzled as he is by the ever-living glories of Greece, Rome, and the Renaissance, that a visit to the ruins of Canossa is almost a duty. There, in spite of himself, by the very isolation and forlorn abandonment of what was once so formidable a seat of feudal despotism and ecclesiastical tyranny, he is forced to confront the obscure but mighty spirit of the

middle ages. There, if anywhere, the men of those iron-hearted times anterior to the Crusades will acquire distinctness for his imagination, when he recalls the three main actors in the drama enacted on the summit of Canossa's rock in the bitter winter of 1077.

Canossa lies almost due south of Reggio d'Emilia, upon the slopes of the Apennines. Starting from Reggio, the carriage-road keeps to the plain for some while in a westerly direction and then bends away towards the mountains. As we approach their spurs, the ground begins to rise. The rich Lombard tilth of maize and vine gives place to English-looking hedgerows, lined with oaks, and studded with handsome dark tufts of green hellebore. The hills descend in melancholy earth-heaps on the plain, crowned here and there with ruined castles. Four of these mediæval strongholds, called Bianello, Montevetro, Monteluzzo, and Montezano, give the name of Quattro Castelli to the commune. The most important of them, Bianello, which, next to Canossa, was the strongest fortress possessed by the Countess Matilda and her ancestors, still presents a considerable mass of masonry, roofed, and habitable. The group formed a kind of advance-guard for Canossa against attack from Lombardy. After passing Quattro Castelli we enter the hills, climbing gently upwards between barren slopes of ashy grey earth—the *débris* of most ancient Apennines—crested at favourable points with lonely towers. In truth the whole country bristles with ruined forts, making it clear that during the middle ages Canossa was but the centre of a great military system, the core and kernel of a fortified position which covered an area to be measured by scores of square miles, reaching far into the mountains, and buttressed on the plain. As yet, however, after nearly two hours' driving, Canossa has not come in sight. At last a turn in the road discloses an opening in the valley of the Enza to the left : up this lateral gorge we see first the Castle of Rossena

on its knoll of solid red rock, flaming in the sunlight ; and then, further withdrawn, detached from all surrounding objects, and reared aloft as though to sweep the sea of waved and broken hills around it, a sharp horn of hard white stone. That is Canossa—the *alba Canossa*, the *candida petra* of its rhyming chronicler. There is no mistaking the commanding value of its situation. At the same time the brilliant whiteness of Canossa's rocky hill, contrasted with the red gleam of Rossena, and outlined against the prevailing dulness of these earthy Apennines, secures a picturesque individuality concordant with its unique history and unrivalled strength.

There is still a journey of two hours before the castle can be reached : and this may be performed on foot or horseback. The path winds upward over broken ground ; following the *arête* of curiously jumbled and thwarted hill-slopes ; passing beneath the battlements of Rossena, whence the unfortunate Everelina threw herself in order to escape the savage love of her lord and jailor ; and then skirting those horrid earthen *balze* which are so common and so unattractive a feature of Apennine scenery. The most hideous *balze* to be found in the length and breadth of Italy are probably those of Volterra, from which the citizens themselves recoil with a kind of terror, and which lure melancholy men by intolerable fascination on to suicide. For ever crumbling, altering with frost and rain, discharging gloomy glaciers of slow-crawling mud, and scarring the hillside with tracts of barrenness, these earth-precipices are among the most ruinous and uncomfortable failures of nature. They have not even so much of wildness or grandeur as forms the saving merit of nearly all wasteful things in the world, and can only be classed with the desolate *ghiare* of Italian river-beds.

Such as they are, these *balze* form an appropriate preface to the gloomy and repellent isolation of Canossa. The rock towers from a narrow platform to the height of rather more

than 160 feet from its base. The top is fairly level, forming an irregular triangle, of which the greatest length is about 260 feet, and the width about 100 feet. Scarcely a vestige of any building can be traced either upon the platform or the summit, with the exception of a broken wall and windows supposed to belong to the end of the sixteenth century. The ancient castle, with its triple circuit of walls, enclosing barracks for the garrison, lodgings for the lord and his retainers, a stately church, a sumptuous monastery, storehouses, stables, workshops, and all the various buildings of a fortified stronghold, have utterly disappeared. The very passage of approach cannot be ascertained; for it is doubtful whether the present irregular path that scales the western face of the rock be really the remains of some old staircase, corresponding to that by which Mont S. Michel in Normandy is ascended. One thing is tolerably certain—that the three walls of which we hear so much from the chroniclers, and which played so picturesque a part in the drama of Henry IV.'s penance, surrounded the cliff at its base, and embraced a large acreage of ground. The citadel itself must have been but the acropolis or keep of an extensive fortress.

There has been plenty of time since the year 1255, when the people of Reggio sacked and destroyed Canossa, for Nature to resume her undisputed sway by obliterating the handiwork of men; and at present Nature forms the chief charm of Canossa. Lying one afternoon of May on the crisp short grass at the edge of a precipice purple with iris in full blossom, I surveyed, from what were once the battlements of Matilda's castle, a prospect than which there is none more spirit-stirring by reason of its beauty and its manifold associations in Europe. The lower castle-crowded hills have sunk. Reggio lies at our feet, shut in between the crests of Monte Carboniano and Monte delle Celle. Beyond Reggio stretches Lombardy—the fairest and most memorable battle-field of nations, the richest and most highly cultivated garden of civilised industry. Nearly

all the Lombard cities may be seen, some of them faint like bluish films of vapour, some clear with dome and spire. There is Modena and her Ghirlandina. Carpi, Parma, Mirandola, Verona, Mantua, lie well-defined and russet on the flat green map ; and there flashes a bend of lordly Po ; and there the Euganeans rise like islands, telling us where Padua and Ferrara nestle in the amethystine haze. Beyond and above all to the northward sweep the Alps, tossing their silvery crests up into the cloudless sky from the violet mist that girds their flanks and drowns their basements. Monte Adamello and the Ortler, the cleft of the Brenner, and the sharp peaks of the Venetian Alps are all distinctly visible. An eagle flying straight from our eyrie might traverse Lombardy and light among the snow-fields of the Valtelline between sunrise and sundown. Nor is the prospect tame to southward. Here the Apennines roll, billow above billow, in majestic desolation, soaring to snow summits in the Pellegrino region. As our eye attempts to thread that labyrinth of hill and vale, we tell ourselves that those roads wind to Tuscany, and yonder stretches Garfagnana, where Ariosto lived and mused in honourable exile from the world he loved.

It was by one of the mountain passes that lead from Lucca northward that the first founder of Canossa is said to have travelled early in the tenth century. Sigifredo, if the tradition may be trusted, was very wealthy ; and with his money he bought lands and signorial rights at Reggio, bequeathing to his children, when he died about 945, a patrimony which they developed into a petty kingdom. Azzo, his second son, fortified Canossa, and made it his principal place of residence. When Lothair, King of Italy, died in 950, leaving his beautiful widow to the ill-treatment of his successor, Berenger, Adelaide found a protector in this Azzo. She had been imprisoned on the Lake of Garda ; but managing to escape in man's clothes to Mantua, she thence sent news of her misfortunes to Canossa.

Azzo lost no time in riding with his knights to her relief, and brought her back in safety to his mountain fastness. It is related that Azzo was afterwards instrumental in calling Otho into Italy and procuring his marriage with Adelaide, in consequence of which events Italy became a fief of the Empire. Owing to the part he played at this time, the Lord of Canossa was recognised as one of the most powerful vassals of the German Emperor in Lombardy. Honours were heaped upon him ; and he grew so rich and formidable that Berenger, the titular King of Italy, laid siege to his fortress of Canossa. The memory of this siege, which lasted for three years and a half, is said still to linger in the popular traditions of the place. When Azzo died at the end of the tenth century, he left to his son Tedaldo the title of Count of Reggio and Modena ; and this title was soon after raised to that of Marquis. The Marches governed as Vicar of the Empire by Tedaldo included Reggio, Modena, Ferrara, Brescia, and probably Mantua. They stretched, in fact, across the north of Italy, forming a quadrilateral between the Alps and Apennines. Like his father, Tedaldo adhered consistently to the Imperial party ; and when he died and was buried at Canossa, he in his turn bequeathed to his son Bonifazio a power and jurisdiction increased by his own abilities. Bonifazio held the state of a sovereign at Canossa, adding the duchy of Tuscany to his father's fiefs, and meeting the allied forces of the Lombard barons in the field of Coviole like an independent potentate. His power and splendour were great enough to rouse the jealousy of the Emperor ; but Henry III. seems to have thought it more prudent to propitiate this proud vassal, and to secure his kindness, than to attempt his humiliation. Bonifazio married Beatrice, daughter of Frederick, Duke of Lorraine—her whose marble sarcophagus in the Campo Santo at Pisa is said to have inspired Niccola Pisano with his new style of sculpture. Their only child, Matilda, was born, probably at Lucca, in 1046 ; and

six years after her birth, Bonifazio, who had swayed his subjects like an iron-handed tyrant, was murdered. To the great house of Canossa, the rulers of one-third of Italy, there now remained only two women, Bonifazio's widow Beatrice, and his daughter Matilda. Beatrice married Godfrey, Duke of Lorraine, who was recognised by Henry IV. as her husband and as feudatory of the Empire in the full place of Boniface. He died about 1070; and in this year Matilda was married by proxy to his son, Godfrey the Hunchback, whom, however, she did not see till the year 1072. The marriage was not a happy one; and the question has even been disputed among Matilda's biographers whether it was ever consummated. At any rate it did not last long; for Godfrey was killed at Antwerp in 1076. In this year Matilda also lost her mother, Beatrice, who died at Pisa, and was buried in the cathedral.

By this rapid enumeration of events it will be seen how the power and honours of the house of Canossa, including Tuscany, Spoleto, and the fairest portions of Lombardy, had devolved upon a single woman of the age of thirty at the moment when the fierce quarrel between Pope and Emperor began in the year 1076. Matilda was destined to play a great, a striking, and a tragic part in the opening drama of Italian history. Her decided character and uncompromising course of action have won for her the name of '*la gran donna d'Italia*', and have caused her memory to be blessed or execrated, according as the temporal pretensions and spiritual tyranny of the Papacy may have found supporters or opponents in posterity. She was reared from childhood in habits of austerity and unquestioning piety. Submission to the Church became for her not merely a rule of conduct, but a passionate enthusiasm. She identified herself with the cause of four successive Popes, protected her idol, the terrible and iron-hearted Hildebrand, in the time of his adversity; remained faithful to his principles after his death; and having served the Holy See with all her force and all that

she possessed through all her life-time, she bequeathed her vast dominions to it on her death-bed. Like some of the greatest mediæval characters—like Hildebrand himself—Matilda was so thoroughly of one piece, that she towers above the mists of ages with the massive grandeur of an incarnated idea. She is for us the living statue of a single thought, an undivided impulse, the more than woman born to represent her age. Nor was it without reason that Dante symbolised in her the love of Holy Church ; though students of the ‘Purgatory’ will hardly recognise the lovely maiden, singing and plucking flowers beside the stream of Lethe, in the stern and warlike chatelaine of Canossa. Unfortunately we know but little of Matilda’s personal appearance. Her health was not strong ; and it is said to have been weakened, especially in her last illness, by ascetic observances. Yet she headed her own troops, armed with sword and cuirass, avoiding neither peril nor fatigue in the quarrels of her master Gregory. Up to the year 1622 two strong suits of mail were preserved at Quattro Castelli, which were said to have been worn by her in battle, and which were afterwards sold on the market-place at Reggio. This habit of donning armour does not, however, prove that Matilda was exceptionally vigorous ; for in those savage times she could hardly have played the part of heroine without participating personally in the dangers of warfare.

No less monumental in the plastic unity of his character was the monk Hildebrand, who for twenty years before his elevation to the Papacy had been the maker of Popes and the creator of the policy of Rome. When he was himself elected in the year 1073, and had assumed the name of Gregory VII., he immediately began to put in practice the plans for Church aggrandisement he had slowly matured during the previous quarter of a century. To free the Church from its subservience to the Empire, to assert the Pope’s right to ratify the election of the Emperor and to exercise the right of jurisdiction over

him, to place ecclesiastical appointments in the sole power of the Roman See, and to render the celibacy of the clergy obligatory, were the points he had resolved to carry. Taken singly and together, these chief aims of Hildebrand's policy had but one object—the magnification of the Church at the expense both of the people and of secular authorities, and the further separation of the Church from the ties and sympathies of common life that bound it to humanity. To accuse Hildebrand of personal ambition would be but shallow criticism, though it is clear that his inflexible and puissant nature found a savage selfish pleasure in trampling upon power and humbling pride at warfare with his own. Yet his was in no sense an egotistic purpose like that which moved the Popes of the Renaissance to dismember Italy for their bastards. Hildebrand, like Matilda, was himself the creature of a great idea. These two potent personalities completely understood each other, and worked towards a single end. The mythopœic fancy might conceive of them as the male and female manifestations of one dominant faculty, the spirit of ecclesiastical dominion incarnate in a man and woman of almost superhuman mould.

Opposed to them, as the third actor in the drama of Canossa, was a man of feebler mould. Henry IV., King of Italy, but not yet crowned Emperor, had none of his opponents' unity of purpose or monumental dignity of character. At war with his German feudatories, browbeaten by rebellious sons, unfaithful and cruel to his wife, vacillating in the measures he adopted to meet his divers difficulties, at one time tormented by his conscience into cowardly submission, and at another treasonably neglectful of the most solemn obligations, Henry was no match for the stern wills against which he was destined to break in unavailing passion. Early disagreements with Gregory had culminated in his excommunication. The German nobles abandoned his cause; and Henry found it expedient to summon a council in Augsburg for the settlement of matters

in dispute between the Empire and the Papacy. Gregory expressed his willingness to attend this council, and set forth from Rome accompanied by the Countess Matilda in December, 1076. He did not, however, travel further than Vercelli, for news here reached him that Henry was about to enter Italy at the head of a powerful army. Matilda hereupon persuaded the Holy Father to place himself in safety among her strongholds of Canossa. Thither accordingly Gregory retired before the ending of that year ; and bitter were the sarcasms uttered by the imperial partisans in Italy upon this protection offered by a fair countess to the monk who had been made a Pope. The foul calumnies of that bygone age would be unworthy of even so much as this notice, if we did not trace in them the ineradicable Italian tendency to cynical insinuation—a tendency which has involved the history of the Renaissance Popes in an almost impenetrable mist of lies and exaggerations.

Henry was in truth upon his road to Italy, but with a very different attendance from that which Gregory expected. Accompanied by Bertha, his wife, and his boy son Conrad, the Emperor elect left Spires in the condition of a fugitive, crossed Burgundy, spent Christmas at Besançon, and journeyed to the foot of Mont Cenis. It is said that he was followed by a single male servant of mean birth ; and if the tale of his adventures during the passage of the Alps can be credited, history presents fewer spectacles more picturesque than the straits to which this representative of the Cæsars, this supreme chief of feudal civility, this ruler destined still to be the leader of mighty armies and the father of a line of monarchs, was exposed. Concealing his real name and state, he induced some shepherds to lead him and his escort through the thick snows to the summit of Mont Cenis ; and by the help of these men the imperial party were afterwards let down the snow-slopes on the further side by means of ropes. Bertha and her women were sewn up in hides and dragged across the frozen surface of the

winter drifts. It was a year memorable for its severity. Heavy snow had fallen in October, which continued ice-bound and unyielding till the following April.

No sooner had Henry reached Turin, than he set forward again in the direction of Canossa. The fame of his arrival had preceded him, and he found that his party was far stronger in Italy than he had ventured to expect. Proximity to the Church of Rome divests its fulminations of half their terrors. The Italian bishops and barons, less superstitious than the Germans, and with greater reason to resent the domineering graspingness of Gregory, were ready to espouse the Emperor's cause. Henry gathered a formidable force as he marched onward across Lombardy; and some of the most illustrious prelates and nobles of the South were in his suite. A more determined leader than Henry proved himself to be, might possibly have forced Gregory to some accommodation, in spite of the strength of Canossa and the Pope's invincible obstinacy, by proper use of these supporters. Meanwhile the adherents of the Church were mustered in Matilda's fortress; among whom may be mentioned Azzo, the progenitor of Este and Brunswick; Hugh, Abbot of Clugny; and the princely family of Piedmont. 'I am become a second Rome,' exclaims Canossa, in the language of Matilda's rhyming chronicler; 'all honours are mine; I hold at once both Pope and King, the princes of Italy and those of Gaul, those of Rome, and those from far beyond the Alps.' The stage was ready; the audience had assembled; and now the three great actors were about to meet. Immediately upon his arrival at Canossa, Henry sent for his cousin, the Countess Matilda, and besought her to intercede for him with Gregory. He was prepared to make any concessions or to undergo any humiliations, if only the ban of excommunication might be removed; nor, cowed as he was by his own superstitious conscience, and by the memory of the opposition he had met with from his German vassals, does he

seem to have once thought of meeting force with force, and of returning to his northern kingdom triumphant in the overthrow of Gregory's pride. Matilda undertook to plead his cause before the Pontiff. But Gregory was not to be moved so soon to mercy. 'If Henry has in truth repented,' he replied, 'let him lay down crown and sceptre, and declare himself unworthy of the name of king.' The only point conceded to the suppliant was that he should be admitted in the garb of a penitent within the precincts of the castle. Leaving his retinue outside the walls, Henry entered the first series of outworks, and was thence conducted to the second, so that between him and the citadel itself there still remained the third of the surrounding bastions. Here he was bidden to wait the Pope's pleasure; and here, in the midst of that bitter winter weather, while the fierce winds of the Apennines were sweeping sleet upon him in their passage from Monte Pellegrino to the plain, he knelt barefoot, clothed in sackcloth, fasting from dawn till eve, for three whole days. On the morning of the fourth day, judging that Gregory was inexorable, and that his suit would not be granted, Henry retired to the Chapel of S. Nicholas, which stood within this second precinct. There he called to his aid the Abbot of Clugny and the Countess, both of whom were his relations, and who, much as they might sympathise with Gregory, could hardly be supposed to look with satisfaction on their royal kinsman's outrage. The Abbot told Henry that nothing in the world could move the Pope; but Matilda, when in turn he fell before her knees and wept, engaged to do for him the utmost. She probably knew that the moment for unbending had arrived, and that her imperious guest could not with either decency or prudence prolong the outrage offered to the civil chief of Christendom. It was January 25 when the Emperor elect was brought, half dead with cold and misery, into the Pope's presence. There he prostrated himself in the dust, crying aloud for pardon. It is said that Gregory first

placed his foot upon Henry's neck, uttering these words of Scripture : 'Super aspidem et basiliscum ambulabis, et conculcabis leonem et draconem,' and that then he raised him from the earth and formally pronounced his pardon. The prelates and nobles who took part in this scene were compelled to guarantee with their own oaths the vows of obedience pronounced by Henry ; so that in the very act of reconciliation a new insult was offered to him. After this Gregory said mass, and permitted Henry to communicate ; and at the close of the day a banquet was served, at which the King sat down to meat with the Pope and the Countess.

It is probable that, while Henry's penance was performed in the castle courts beneath the rock, his reception by the Pope, and all that subsequently happened, took place in the citadel itself. But of this we have no positive information. Indeed the silence of the chronicles as to the topography of Canossa is peculiarly unfortunate for lovers of the picturesque in historic detail, now that there is no possibility of tracing the outlines of the ancient building. Had the author of the '*Vita Mathildis*' (Muratori, vol. v.) foreseen that his beloved Canossa would one day be nothing but a mass of native rock, he would undoubtedly have been more explicit on these points ; and much that is vague about an event only paralleled by our Henry II.'s penance before Becket's shrine at Canterbury, might now be clear.

Very little remains to be told about Canossa. During the same year, 1077, Matilda made the celebrated donation of her fiefs to Holy Church. This was accepted by Gregory in the name of S. Peter, and it was confirmed by a second deed during the pontificate of Urban IV. in 1102. Though Matilda subsequently married Guelfo d'Este, son of the Duke of Bavaria, she was speedily divorced from him ; nor was there any heir to a marriage ridiculous by reason of disparity of age, the bridegroom being but eighteen, while the bride was forty-

three in the year of her second nuptials. During one of Henry's descents into Italy, he made an unsuccessful attack upon Canossa, assailing it at the head of a considerable force one October morning in 1092. Matilda's biographer informs us that the mists of autumn veiled his beloved fortress from the eyes of the beleaguerers. They had not even the satisfaction of beholding the unvanquished citadel ; and, what was more, the banner of the Emperor was seized and dedicated as a trophy in the Church of S. Apollonio. In the following year the Countess opened her gates of Canossa to an illustrious fugitive, Adelaide, the wife of her old foeman, Henry, who had escaped with difficulty from the insults and the cruelty of her husband. After Henry's death, his son, the Emperor Henry V., paid Matilda a visit in her castle of Bianello, addressed her by the name of mother, and conferred upon her the vice-regency of Liguria. At the age of sixty-nine she died, in 1115, at Bondeno de' Roncori, and was buried, not among her kinsmen at Canossa, but in an abbey of S. Benedict near Mantua. With her expired the main line of the noble house she represented ; though Canossa, now made a fief of the Empire in spite of Matilda's donation, was given to a family which claimed descent from Bonifazio's brother Conrad—a young man killed in the battle of Covolo. This family, in its turn, was extinguished in the year 1570 ; but a junior branch still exists at Verona. It will be remembered that Michelangelo Buonarroti claimed kinship with the Count of Canossa ; and a letter from the Count is extant acknowledging the validity of his pretension.

As far back as 1255 the people of Reggio destroyed the castle ; nor did the nobles of Canossa distinguish themselves in subsequent history among those families who based their despotisms on the *débris* of the Imperial power in Lombardy. It seemed destined that Canossa and all belonging to it should remain as a mere name and memory of the outgrown middle

ages. Estensi, Carraresi, Visconti, Bentivogli, and Gonzaghi, belong to a later period of Lombard history, and mark the dawn of the Renaissance.

As I lay and mused that afternoon of May upon the short grass, cropped by two grey goats, whom a little boy was tending, it occurred to me to ask the woman who had served me as guide, whether any legend remained in the country concerning the Countess Matilda. She had often, probably, been asked this question by other travellers. Therefore she was more than usually ready with an answer, which, as far as I could understand her dialect, was this. Matilda was a great and potent witch, whose summons the devil was bound to obey. One day she aspired, alone of all her sex, to say mass; but when the moment came for sacring the elements, a thunderbolt fell from the clear sky, and reduced her to ashes.¹ That the most single-hearted handmaid of the Holy Church, whose life was one long devotion to its ordinances, should survive in this grotesque myth, might serve to point a satire upon the vanity of earthly fame. The legend in its very extravagance is a fanciful distortion of the truth.

¹ I find that this story is common in the country round Canossa. It is mentioned by Professor A. Ferretti in his monograph entitled *Canossa, Studi e Ricerche*, Reggio, 1876, a work to which I am indebted, and which will repay careful study.

FORNOVO.

IN the town of Parma there is one surpassingly strange relic of the past. The palace of the Farnesi, like many a haunt of upstart tyranny and beggared pride on these Italian plains, rises misshapen and disconsolate above the stream that bears the city's name. The squalor of this grey-brown edifice of formless brick, left naked like the palace of the same Farnesi at Piacenza, has something even horrid in it now that only vague memory survives of its former uses. The princely *sprezzatura* of its ancient occupants, careless of these unfinished courts and unroofed galleries amid the splendour of their purfled silks and the glitter of their torchlight pageantry, has yielded to sullen cynicism—the cynicism of arrested ruin and unreverend age. All that was satisfying to the senses and distracting to the eyesight in their transitory pomp has passed away, leaving a sinister and naked shell. Remembrance can but summon up the crimes, the madness, the trivialities of those dead palace-builders. An atmosphere of evil clings to the dilapidated walls, as though the tainted spirit of the infamous Pier Luigi still possessed the spot, on which his toadstool brood of princelings sprouted in the mud of their misdeeds. Enclosed in this huge labyrinth of brickwork is the relic of which I spoke. It is the once world-famous Teatro Farnese, raised in the year 1618 by Ranunzio Farnese for the marriage of Odoardo Farnese with Margaret of Austria. Giambattista Aleotti, a native of pageant-loving Ferrara, traced the stately curves and noble orders of the

galleries, designed the columns that support the raftered roof, marked out the orchestra, arranged the stage; and breathed into the whole the spirit of Palladio's most heroic neo-Latin style. Vast, built of wood, dishevelled, with broken statues and blurred coats of arms, with its empty scene, its uncurling frescoes, its hangings all in rags, its cobwebs of two centuries, its dust and mildew and discoloured gold—this theatre, a sham in its best days, and now that ugliest of things, a sham unmasked and naked to the light of day, is yet sublime, because of its proportioned harmony, because of its grand Roman manner. The sight and feeling of it fasten upon the mind and abide in the memory like a nightmare,—like one of Piranesi's weirdest and most passion-haunted etchings for the *Carceri*. Idling there at noon in the twilight of the dust-bedarkened windows, we fill the tiers of those high galleries with ladies, the space below with grooms and pages ; the stage is ablaze with torches, and an Italian Masque, such as our Marlowe dreamed of, fills the scene. But it is impossible to dower these fancies with even such life as in healthier, happier ruins phantasy may lend to imagination's figments. This theatre is like a maniac's skull, empty of all but unrealities and mockeries of things that are. The ghosts we raise here could never have been living men and women : *questi sciaurati non fur mai vivi*. So clinging is the sense of instability that appertains to every fragment of that dry-rot tyranny which seized by evil fortune in the sunset of her golden day on Italy.

In this theatre I mused one morning after visiting Fornovo ; and the thoughts suggested by the battlefield found their proper atmosphere in the dilapidated place. What, indeed, is the Teatro Farnese but a symbol of those hollow principalities which the despot and the stranger built in Italy after the fatal date of 1494, when national enthusiasm and political energy were expiring in a blaze of art, and when the Italians as a people had ceased to be ; but when the phantom of their former life,

surviving in high works of beauty, was still superb by reason of imperishable style ! How much in Italy of the Renaissance was, like this plank-built plastered theatre, a glorious sham ! The sham was seen through then ; and now it stands unmasked : and yet, strange to say, so perfect is its form that we respect the sham and yield our spirits to the incantation of its music.

The battle of Fornovo, as modern battles go, was a paltry affair ; and even at the time it seemed sufficiently without result. Yet the trumpets which rang on July 6, 1495, for the onset, sounded the *réveillé* of the modern world ; and in the inconclusive termination of the struggle of that day, the Italians were already judged and sentenced as a nation. The armies who met that morning represented Italy and France,—Italy, the Sibyl of Renaissance; France, the Sibyl of Revolution. At the fall of evening Europe was already looking northward ; and the last years of the fifteenth century were opening an act which closed in blood at Paris on the ending of the eighteenth.

If it were not for thoughts like these, no one, I suppose, would take the trouble to drive for two hours out of Parma to the little village of Fornovo,—a score of bare grey hovels on the margin of a pebbly river-bed beneath the Apennines. The fields on either side, as far as eye can see, are beautiful indeed in May sunlight, painted here with flax, like shallow sheets of water reflecting a pale sky, and there with clover red as blood. Scarce unfolded leaves sparkle like flamelets of bright green upon the knotted vines, and the young corn is bending all one way beneath a western breeze. But not less beautiful than this is the whole broad plain of Lombardy ; nor are the nightingales louder here than in the acacia trees around Pavia. As we drive, the fields become less fertile, and the hills encroach upon the level, sending down their spurs upon that waveless plain like blunt rocks jutting out into a tranquil sea. When we reach the bed of the Taro, these hills begin to narrow on either hand, and the road rises. Soon they open out again with gradual curving

lines, forming a kind of amphitheatre filled up from flank to flank with the *ghiara* or pebbly bottom of the Taro. The Taro is not less wasteful than any other of the brotherhood of streams that pour from Alp or Apennine to swell the Po. It wanders, an impatient rivulet, through a wilderness of boulders, uncertain of its aim, shifting its course with the season of the year, unless the jaws of some deep-cloven gully hold it tight and show how insignificant it is. As we advance, the hills approach again ; between their skirts there is nothing but the river-bed ; and now on rising ground above the stream, at the point of juncture between the Ceno and the Taro, we find Fornovo. Beyond the village the valley broadens out once more, disclosing Apennines capped with winter snow. To the right descends the Ceno. To the left foams the Taro, following whose rocky channel we should come at last to Pontremoli and the Tyrrhenian sea beside Sarzana. On a May-day of sunshine like the present, the Taro is a gentle stream. A waggon drawn by two white oxen has just entered its channel, guided by a contadino with goat-skin leggings, wielding a long goad. The patient creatures stem the water, which rises to the peasant's thighs and ripples round the creaking wheels. Swaying to and fro, as the shingles shift upon the river-bed, they make their way across ; and now they have emerged upon the stones ; and now we lose them in a flood of sunlight.

It was by this pass that Charles VIII. in 1495 returned from Tuscany, when the army of the League was drawn up waiting to intercept and crush him in the mousetrap of Fornovo. No road remained for Charles and his troops but the rocky bed of the Taro, running, as I have described it, between the spurs of steep hills. It is true that the valley of the Baganza leads, from a little higher up among the mountains, into Lombardy. But this pass runs straight to Parma ; and to follow it would have brought the French upon the walls of a strong city. Charles could not do otherwise than descend upon the village of

Fornovo, and cut his way thence in the teeth of the Italian army over stream and boulder between the gorges of throttling mountain. The failure of the Italians to achieve what here upon the ground appears so simple, delivered Italy hand-bound to strangers. Had they but succeeded in arresting Charles and destroying his forces at Fornovo, it is just possible that then—even then, at the eleventh hour—I^taly might have gained the sense of national coherence, or at least have proved herself capable of holding by her leagues the foreigner at bay. As it was, the battle of Fornovo, in spite of Venetian bonfires and Mantuan Madonnas of Victory, made her conscious of incompetence and convicted her of cowardice. After Fornovo, her sons scarcely dared to hold their heads up in the field against invaders ; and the battles fought upon her soil were duels among aliens for the prize of Italy.

In order to comprehend the battle of Fornovo in its bearings on Italian history, we must go back to the year 1492, and understand the conditions of the various States of Italy at that date. On April 8 in that year, Lorenzo de' Medici, who had succeeded in maintaining a political equilibrium in the peninsula, expired, and was succeeded by his son Piero, a vain and foolhardy young man, from whom no guidance could be expected. On July 25, Innocent VIII. died, and was succeeded by the very worst Pope who has ever occupied S. Peter's chair, Roderigo Borgia, Alexander VI. It was felt at once that the old order of things had somehow ended, and that a new era, the destinies of which as yet remained incalculable, was opening for Italy. The chief Italian powers, hitherto kept in equipoise by the diplomacy of Lorenzo de' Medici, were these—the Duchy of Milan, the Republic of Venice, the Republic of Florence, the Papacy, and the kingdom of Naples. Minor States, such as the Republics of Genoa and Siena, the Duchies of Urbino and Ferrara, the Marquisate of Mantua, the petty tyrannies of Romagna, and the wealthy city of Bologna, were sufficiently

important to affect the balance of power, and to produce new combinations. For the present purpose it is, however, enough to consider the five great Powers.

After the peace of Constance, which freed the Lombard Communes from Imperial interference in the year 1183, Milan, by her geographical position, rose rapidly to be the first city of North Italy. Without narrating the changes by which she lost her freedom as a Commune, it is enough to state that, earliest of all Italian cities, Milan passed into the hands of a single family. The Visconti managed to convert this flourishing commonwealth, with all its dependencies, into their private property, ruling it exclusively for their own profit, using its municipal institutions as the machinery of administration, and employing the taxes which they raised upon its wealth for purely selfish ends. When the line of the Visconti ended in the year 1447, their tyranny was continued by Francesco Sforza, the son of a poor soldier of adventure, who had raised himself by his military genius, and had married Bianca, the illegitimate daughter of the last Visconti. On the death of Francesco Sforza in 1466, he left two sons, Galeazzo Maria and Lodovico, surnamed Il Moro, both of whom were destined to play a prominent part in history. Galeazzo Maria, dissolute, vicious, and cruel to the core, was murdered by his injured subjects in the year 1476. His son, Giovanni Galeazzo, aged eight, would in course of time have succeeded to the Duchy, had it not been for the ambition of his uncle Lodovico. Lodovico contrived to name himself as Regent for his nephew, whom he kept, long after he had come of age, in a kind of honourable prison. Virtual master in Milan, but without a legal title to the throne, unrecognised in his authority by the Italian powers, and holding it from day to day by craft and fraud, Lodovico at last found his situation untenable ; and it was this difficulty of an usurper to maintain himself in his despotism which, as we shall see, brought the French into Italy.

Venice, the neighbour and constant foe of Milan, had become a close oligarchy by a process of gradual constitutional development, which threw her government into the hands of a few nobles. She was practically ruled by the hereditary members of the Grand Council. Ever since the year 1453, when Constantinople fell beneath the Turk, the Venetians had been more and more straitened in their Oriental commerce, and were thrown back upon the policy of territorial aggrandisement in Italy, from which they had hitherto refrained as alien to the temperament of the Republic. At the end of the fifteenth century Venice therefore became an object of envy and terror to the Italian States. They envied her because she alone was tranquil, wealthy, powerful, and free. They feared her because they had good reason to suspect her of encroachment ; and it was foreseen that if she got the upper hand in Italy, all Italy would be the property of the families inscribed upon the Golden Book. It was thus alone that the Italians comprehended government. The principle of representation being utterly unknown, and the privileged burghers in each city being regarded as absolute and lawful owners of the city and of everything belonging to it, the conquest of a town by a republic implied the political extinction of that town and the disfranchisement of its inhabitants in favour of the conquerors.

Florence at this epoch still called itself a Republic ; and of all Italian commonwealths it was by far the most democratic. Its history, unlike that of Venice, had been the history of continual and brusque changes, resulting in the destruction of the old nobility, in the equalisation of the burghers, and in the formation of a new aristocracy of wealth. From this class of *bourgeois* nobles sprang the Medici, who, by careful manipulation of the State machinery, by the creation of a powerful party devoted to their interests, by flattery of the people, by corruption, by taxation, and by constant scheming, raised themselves to the first place in the commonwealth, and became its

virtual masters. In the year 1492, Lorenzo de' Medici, the most remarkable chief of this despotic family, died, bequeathing his supremacy in the Republic to a son of marked incompetence.

Since the Pontificate of Nicholas V. the See of Rome had entered upon a new period of existence. The Popes no longer dreaded to reside in Rome, but were bent upon making the metropolis of Christendom both splendid as a seat of art and learning, and also potent as the capital of a secular kingdom. Though their fiefs in Romagna and the March were still held but loosely, though their provinces swarmed with petty despots who defied the Papal authority, and though the princely Roman houses of Colonna and Orsini were still strong enough to terrorise the Holy Father in the Vatican, it was now clear that the Papal See must in the end get the better of its adversaries, and consolidate itself into a first-rate power. The internal spirit of the Papacy at this time corresponded to its external policy. It was thoroughly secularised by a series of worldly and vicious pontiffs, who had clean forgotten what their title, Vicar of Christ, implied. They consistently used their religious prestige to enforce their secular authority, while by their temporal power they caused their religious claims to be respected. Corrupt and shameless, they indulged themselves in every vice, openly acknowledged their children, and turned Italy upside down in order to establish favourites and bastards in the principalities they seized as spoils of war.

The kingdom of Naples differed from any other state of Italy. Subject continually to foreign rulers since the decay of the Greek Empire, governed in succession by the Normans, the Hohenstauffens, and the House of Anjou, it had never enjoyed the real independence, or the free institutions, of the northern provinces ; nor had it been Italianised in the same sense as the rest of the peninsula. Despotism, which assumed so many forms in Italy, was here neither the tyranny of a noble

house, nor the masked autocracy of a burgher, nor yet the forceful sway of a condottiere. It had a dynastic character, resembling the monarchy of one of the great European nations, but modified by the peculiar conditions of Italian statecraft. Owing to this dynastic and monarchical complexion of the Neapolitan kingdom, semi-feudal customs flourished in the south far more than in the north of Italy. The barons were more powerful ; and the destinies of the Regno often turned upon their feuds and quarrels with the Crown. At the same time the Neapolitan despots shared the uneasy circumstances of all Italian potentates, owing to the uncertainty of their tenure, both as conquerors and aliens, and also as the nominal vassals of the Holy See. The rights of suzerainty which the Normans had yielded to the Papacy over their southern conquests, and which the Popes had arbitrarily exercised in favour of the Angevine princes, proved a constant source of peril to the rest of Italy by rendering the succession to the crown of Naples doubtful. On the extinction of the Angevine line, however, the throne was occupied by a prince who had no valid title but that of the sword to its possession. Alfonso of Aragon conquered Naples in 1442, and neglecting his hereditary dominion, settled in his Italian capital. Possessed with the enthusiasm for literature which was then the ruling passion of the Italians, and very liberal to men of learning, Alfonso won for himself the surname of Magnanimous. On his death, in 1458, he bequeathed his Spanish kingdom, together with Sicily and Sardinia, to his brother, and left the fruits of his Italian conquest to his bastard, Ferdinand. This Ferdinand, whose birth was buried in profound obscurity, was the reigning sovereign in the year 1492. Of a cruel and sombre temperament, traitorous and tyrannical, Ferdinand was hated by his subjects as much as Alfonso had been loved. He possessed, however, to a remarkable degree, the qualities which at that epoch constituted a consummate statesman ; and though the

history of his reign is the history of plots and conspiracies, of judicial murders and forcible assassinations, of famines produced by iniquitous taxation, and of every kind of diabolical tyranny, Ferdinand contrived to hold his own, in the teeth of a rebellious baronage or a maddened population. His political sagacity amounted almost to a prophetic instinct in the last years of his life, when he became aware that the old order was breaking up in Italy, and had cause to dread that Charles VIII. of France would prove his title to the kingdom of Naples by force of arms.¹

Such were the component parts of the Italian body politic, with the addition of numerous petty principalities and powers, adhering more or less consistently to one or other of the greater States. The whole complex machine was bound together by no sense of common interest, animated by no common purpose, amenable to no central authority. Even such community of feeling as one spoken language gives, was lacking. And yet Italy distinguished herself clearly from the rest of Europe, not merely as a geographical fact, but also as a people intellectually and spiritually one. The rapid rise of humanism had aided in producing this national self-consciousness. Every State and every city was absorbed in the recovery of culture and in the development of art and literature. Far in advance of the other European nations, the Italians regarded the rest of the world as barbarous, priding themselves the while, in spite of mutual jealousies and hatreds, on their Italic civilisation. They were enormously wealthy. The resources of the Papal treasury, the private fortunes of the Florentine bankers, the riches of the Venetian merchants might have purchased all that France or Germany possessed of value. The single Duchy of Milan yielded to its masters 700,000 golden florins of revenue, ac-

¹ Charles claimed under the will of René of Anjou, who in turn claimed under the will of Joan II.

cording to the computation of De Comines. In default of a confederative system, the several States were held in equilibrium by diplomacy. By far the most important people, next to the despots and the captains of adventure, were ambassadors and orators. War itself had become a matter of arrangement, bargain, and diplomacy. The game of stratagem was played by generals who had been friends yesterday and might be friends again to-morrow, with troops who felt no loyalty whatever for the standards under which they listed. To avoid slaughter and to achieve the ends of warfare by parade and demonstration was the interest of every one concerned. Looking back upon Italy of the fifteenth century, taking account of her religious deadness and moral corruption, estimating the absence of political vigour in the republics and the noxious tyranny of the despots, analysing her lack of national spirit, and comparing her splendid life of cultivated ease with the want of martial energy, we can see but too plainly that contact with a simpler and stronger people could not but produce a terrible catastrophe. The Italians themselves, however, were far from comprehending this. Centuries of undisturbed internal intrigue had accustomed them to play the game of forfeits with each other, and nothing warned them that the time was come at which diplomacy, finesse, and craft would stand them in ill stead against rapacious conquerors.

The storm which began to gather over Italy in the year 1492 had its first beginning in the North. Lodovico Sforza's position in the Duchy of Milan was becoming every day more difficult, when a slight and to all appearances insignificant incident converted his apprehension of danger into panic. It was customary for the States of Italy to congratulate a new Pope on his election by their ambassadors ; and this ceremony had now to be performed for Roderigo Borgia. Lodovico proposed that his envoys should go to Rome together with those of Venice, Naples, and Florence ; but Piero de' Medici, whose

vanity made him wish to send an embassy in his own name, contrived that Lodovico's proposal should be rejected both by Florence and the King of Naples. So strained was the situation of Italian affairs that Lodovico saw in this repulse a menace to his own usurped authority. Feeling himself isolated among the princes of his country, rebuffed by the Medici, and coldly treated by the King of Naples, he turned in his anxiety to France, and advised the young king, Charles VIII., to make good his claim upon the Regno. It was a bold move to bring the foreigner thus into Italy ; and even Lodovico, who prided himself upon his sagacity, could not see how things would end. He thought his situation so hazardous, however, that any change must be for the better. Moreover, a French invasion of Naples would tie the hands of his natural foe, King Ferdinand, whose granddaughter, Isabella of Aragon, had married Giovanni Galeazzo Sforza, and was now the rightful Duchess of Milan. When the Florentine ambassador at Milan asked him how he had the courage to expose Italy to such peril, his reply betrayed the egotism of his policy : ' You talk to me of Italy ; but when have I looked Italy in the face ? No one ever gave a thought to my affairs. I have, therefore, had to give them such security as I could.'

Charles VIII. was young, light-brained, romantic, and ruled by *parvenus*, who had an interest in disturbing the old order of the monarchy. He lent a willing ear to Lodovico's invitation, backed as this was by the eloquence and passion of numerous Italian refugees and exiles. Against the advice of his more prudent counsellors, he taxed all the resources of his kingdom, and concluded treaties on disadvantageous terms with England, Germany, and Spain, in order that he might be able to concentrate all his attention upon the Italian expedition. At the end of the year 1493, it was known that the invasion was resolved upon. Gentile Becchi, the Florentine envoy at the Court of France, wrote to Piero de' Medici : ' If the King

succeeds, it is all over with Italy—*tutta a bordello.*' The extraordinary selfishness of the several Italian States at this critical moment deserves to be noticed. The Venetians, as Paolo Antonio Soderini described them to Piero de' Medici, 'are of opinion that to keep quiet, and to see other potentates of Italy spending and suffering, cannot but be to their advantage. They trust no one, and feel sure they have enough money to be able at any moment to raise sufficient troops, and so to guide events according to their inclinations.' As the invasion was directed against Naples, Ferdinand of Aragon displayed the acutest sense of the situation. 'Frenchmen,' he exclaimed, in what appears like a prophetic passion when contrasted with the cold indifference of others no less really menaced, 'have never come into Italy without inflicting ruin; and this invasion, if rightly considered, cannot but bring universal ruin, although it seems to manace us alone.' In his agony Ferdinand applied to Alexander VI. But the Pope looked coldly upon him, because the King of Naples, with rare perspicacity, had predicted that his elevation to the Papacy would prove disastrous to Christendom. Alexander preferred to ally himself with Venice and Milan. Upon this Ferdinand wrote as follows: 'It seems fated that the Popes should leave no peace in Italy. We are compelled to fight; but the Duke of Bari (*i.e.* Lodovico Sforza) should think what may ensue from the tumult he is stirring up. He who raises this wind will not be able to lay the tempest when he likes. Let him look to the past, and he will see how every time that our internal quarrels have brought Powers from beyond the Alps into Italy, these have oppressed and lorded over her.'

Terribly verified as these words were destined to be,—and they were no less prophetic in their political sagacity than Savonarola's prediction of the Sword and bloody Scourge,—it was now too late to avert the coming ruin. On March 1, 1494, Charles was with his army at Lyons. Early in September he

had crossed the pass of Mont Genêvre and taken up his quarters in the town of Asti. There is no need to describe in detail the holiday march of the French troops through Lombardy, Tuscany, and Rome, until, without having struck a blow of consequence, the gates of Naples opened to receive the conqueror upon February 22, 1495. Philippe de Comines, who parted from the king at Asti and passed the winter as his envoy at Venice, has more than once recorded his belief that nothing but the direct interposition of Providence could have brought so mad an expedition to so successful a conclusion. ‘*Dieu monstroit conduire l’entreprise.*’ No sooner, however, was Charles installed in Naples than the States of Italy began to combine against him. Lodovico Sforza had availed himself of the general confusion consequent upon the first appearance of the French, to poison his nephew. He was, therefore, now the titular, as well as virtual, Lord of Milan. So far, he had achieved what he desired, and had no further need of Charles. The overtures he now made to the Venetians and the Pope terminated in a League between these Powers for the expulsion of the French from Italy. Germany and Spain entered into the same alliance; and De Comines, finding himself treated with marked coldness by the Signory of Venice, despatched a courier to warn Charles in Naples of the coming danger. After a stay of only fifty days in his new capital, the French King hurried northward. Moving quickly through the Papal States and Tuscany, he engaged his troops in the passes of the Apennines near Pontremoli, and on July 5, 1495, took up his quarters in the village of Fornovo. De Comines reckons that his whole fighting force at this time did not exceed 9,000 men, with fourteen pieces of artillery. Against him at the opening of the valley was the army of the League, numbering some 35,000 men, of whom three-fourths were supplied by Venice, the rest by Lodovico Sforza and the German Emperor. Francesco Gonzaga, Marquis of Mantua, was the general of the

Venetian forces ; and on him, therefore, fell the real responsibility of the battle.

De Comines remarks on the imprudence of the allies, who allowed Charles to advance as far as Fornovo, when it was their obvious policy to have established themselves in the village and so have caught the French troops in a trap. It was a Sunday when the French marched down upon Fornovo. Before them spread the plain of Lombardy, and beyond it the white crests of the Alps. ‘We were,’ says De Comines, ‘in a valley between two little mountain flanks, and in that valley ran a river which could easily be forded on foot, except when it is swelled with sudden rains. The whole valley was a bed of gravel and big stones, very difficult for horses, about a quarter of a league in breadth, and on the right bank lodged our enemies.’ Any one who has visited Fornovo can understand the situation of the two armies. Charles occupied the village on the right bank of the Taro. On the same bank, extending downward toward the plain, lay the host of the allies ; and in order that Charles should escape them, it was necessary that he should cross the Taro, just below its junction with the Ceno, and reach Lombardy by marching in a parallel line with his foes.

All through the night of Sunday it thundered and rained incessantly ; so that on the Monday morning the Taro was considerably swollen. At seven o’clock the king sent for De Comines, who found him already armed and mounted on the finest horse he had ever seen. The name of this charger was *Savoy*. He was black, one-eyed, and of middling height ; and to his great courage, as we shall see, Charles owed life upon that day. The French army, ready for the march, now took to the gravelly bed of the Taro, passing the river at a distance of about a quarter of a league from the allies. As the French left Fornovo, the light cavalry of their enemies entered the village and began to attack the baggage. At the same time

the Marquis of Mantua, with the flower of his men-at-arms, crossed the Taro and harassed the rear of the French host ; while raids from the right bank to the left were constantly being made by sharp-shooters and flying squadrons. ‘At this moment,’ says De Comines, ‘not a single man of us could have escaped if our ranks had once been broken.’ The French army was divided into three main bodies. The vanguard consisted of some 350 men-at-arms, 3,000 Switzers, 300 archers of the Guard, a few mounted crossbow-men, and the artillery. Next came the Battle, and after this the rearguard. At the time when the Marquis of Mantua made his attack, the French rearguard had not yet crossed the river. Charles quitted the van, put himself at the head of his chivalry, and charged the Italian horsemen, driving them back, some to the village and others to their camp. De Comines observes, that had the Italian knights been supported in this passage of arms by the light cavalry of the Venetian force, called Stradiots, the French must have been outnumbered, thrown into confusion, and defeated. As it was, these Stradiots were engaged in plundering the baggage of the French ; and the Italians, accustomed to bloodless encounters, did not venture, in spite of their immense superiority of numbers, to renew the charge. In the pursuit of Gonzaga’s horsemen Charles outstripped his staff, and was left almost alone to grapple with a little band of mounted foemen. It was here that his noble horse, Savoy, saved his person by plunging and charging till assistance came up from the French, and enabled the King to regain his van.

It is incredible, considering the nature of the ground and the number of the troops engaged, that the allies should not have returned to the attack and have made the passage of the French into the plain impossible. De Comines, however, assures us that the actual engagement only lasted a quarter of an hour, and the pursuit of the Italians three quarters of an hour. After they had once resolved to fly, they threw away their

lances and betook themselves to Reggio and Parma. So complete was their discomfiture, that De Comines gravely blames the want of military genius and adventure in the French host. If, instead of advancing along the left bank of the Taro and there taking up his quarters for the night, Charles had recrossed the stream and pursued the army of the allies, he would have had the whole of Lombardy at his discretion. As it was, the French army encamped not far from the scene of the action in great discomfort and anxiety. De Comines had to bivouac in a vineyard, without even a mantle to wrap round him, having lent his cloak to the King in the morning ; and as it had been pouring all day, the ground could not have afforded very luxurious quarters. The same extraordinary luck which had attended the French in their whole expedition, now favoured their retreat ; and the same pusillanimity which the allies had shown at Fornovo, prevented them from re-forming and engaging with the army of Charles upon the plain. One hour before daybreak on Tuesday morning, the French broke up their camp and succeeded in clearing the valley. That night they lodged at Fiorenzuola, the next at Piacenza, and so on ; till on the eighth day they arrived at Asti without having been so much as incommoded by the army of the allies in their rear.

Although the field of Fornovo was in reality so disgraceful to the Italians, they reckoned it a victory upon the technical pretence that the camp and baggage of the French had been seized. Illuminations and rejoicings made the piazza of S. Mark in Venice gay, and Francesco da Gonzaga had the glorious Madonna della Vittoria painted for him by Mantegna, in commemoration of what ought only to have been remembered with shame.

A fitting conclusion to this sketch, connecting its close with the commencement, may be found in some remarks upon the manner of warfare to which the Italians of the Renaissance had become accustomed, and which proved so futile on the field of Fornovo. During the middle ages, and in the days of the

Communes, the whole male population of Italy had fought light-armed on foot. Merchant and artisan left the counting-house and the workshop, took shield and pike, and sallied forth to attack the barons in their castles, or to meet the Emperor's troops upon the field. It was with this national militia that the citizens of Florence freed their *Contado* of the nobles, and the burghers of Lombardy gained the battle of Legnano. In course of time, by a process of change which it is not very easy to trace, heavily-armed cavalry began to take the place of infantry in mediæval warfare. Men-at-arms, as they were called, encased from head to foot in iron, and mounted upon chargers no less solidly caparisoned, drove the foot-soldiers before them at the points of their long lances. Nowhere in Italy do they seem to have met with the fierce resistance which the bears of the Swiss Oberland and the bulls of Uri offered to the knights of Burgundy. No Tuscan Arnold von Winkelried clasped a dozen lances to his bosom that the foeman's ranks might thus be broken at the cost of his own life ; nor did it occur to the Italian burghers to meet the charge of the horsemen with squares protected by bristling spears. They seem, on the contrary, to have abandoned military service with the readiness of men whose energies were already absorbed in the affairs of peace. To become a practised and efficient man-at-arms required long training and a life's devotion. So much time the burghers of the free towns could not spare to military service, while the petty nobles were only too glad to devote themselves to so honourable a calling. Thus it came to pass that a class of professional fighting-men was gradually formed in Italy, whose services the burghers and the princes bought, and by whom the wars of the peninsula were regularly farmed by contract. Wealth and luxury in the great cities continued to increase ; and as the burghers grew more comfortable, they were less inclined to take the field in their own persons, and more disposed to vote large sums of money for the purchase of

necessary aid. At the same time this system suited the despots, since it spared them the peril of arming their own subjects, while they taxed them to pay the services of foreign captains. War thus became a commerce. Romagna, the Marches of Ancona, and other parts of the Papal dominions, supplied a number of petty nobles whose whole business in life it was to form companies of trained horsemen, and with these bands to hire themselves out to the republics and the despots. Gain was the sole purpose of these captains. They sold their service to the highest bidder, fighting irrespectively of principle or patriotism, and passing with the coldest equanimity from the camp of one master to that of his worst foe. It was impossible that true military spirit should survive this prostitution of the art of war. A species of mock warfare prevailed in Italy. Battles were fought with a view to booty more than victory ; prisoners were taken for the sake of ransom ; bloodshed was carefully avoided, for the men who fought on either side in any pitched field had been comrades with their present foemen in the last encounter, and who could tell how soon the general of the one host might not need his rival's troops to recruit his own ranks? Like every genuine institution of the Italian Renaissance, warfare was thus a work of fine art, a masterpiece of intellectual subtlety ; and like the Renaissance itself, this peculiar form of warfare was essentially transitional. The cannon and the musket were already in use ; and it only required one blast of gunpowder to turn the sham-fight of courtly, traitorous, finessing captains of adventure into something terribly more real. To men like the Marquis of Mantua war had been a highly profitable game of skill ; to men like the Maréchal de Gié it was a murderous horse-play ; and this difference the Italians were not slow to perceive. When they cast away their lances at Fornovo, and fled—in spite of their superior numbers—never to return, one fair-seeming sham of the fifteenth century became a vision of the past.

TWO DRAMATISTS OF THE LAST CENTURY.

THERE are few contrasts more striking than that which is presented by the memoirs of Goldoni and Alfieri. Both of these men bore names highly distinguished in the history of Italian literature. Both of them were framed by nature with strongly marked characters, and fitted to perform a special work in the world. Both have left behind them records of their lives and literary labours, singularly illustrative of their peculiar differences. There is no instance in which we see more clearly the philosophical value of autobiographies, than in these vivid pictures which the great Italian tragedian and comic author have delineated. Some of the most interesting works of Leonardo da Vinci, Giorgione, Albert Dürer, Rembrandt, Rubens, and Andrea del Sarto, are their portraits painted by themselves. These pictures exhibit not only the lineaments of the masters, but also their art. The hand which drew them was the hand which drew the 'Last Supper,' or the 'Madonna of the Tribune :' colour, method, chiaroscuro, all that makes up manner in painting, may be studied on the same canvas as that which faithfully represents the features of the man whose genius gave his style its special character. We seem to understand the clear calm majesty of Leonardo's manner, the silver-gray harmonies and smooth facility of Andrea's Madonnas, the better for looking at their faces drawn by their own hands at Florence. And if this be the case with a dumb picture, how far higher must be the interest and importance of the written

life of a known author. Not only do we recognise in its composition the style and temper and habits of thought which are familiar to us in his other writings ; but we also hear from his own lips how these were formed, how his tastes took their peculiar direction, what circumstances acted on his character, what hopes he had, and where he failed. Even should his autobiography not bear the marks of uniform candour, it probably reveals more of the actual truth, more of the man's real nature in its height and depth, than any memoir written by friend or foe. Its unconscious admissions, its general spirit, and the inferences which we draw from its perusal, are far more valuable than any mere statement of facts or external analysis, however scientific. When we become acquainted with the series of events which led to the conception or attended the production of some masterpiece of literature, a new light is thrown upon its beauties, fresh life bursts forth from every chapter, and we seem to have a nearer and more personal interest in its success. What a powerful sensation, for instance, is that which we experience when, after studying the 'Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,' Gibbon tells us how the thought of writing it came to him upon the Capitol, among the ruins of dead Rome, and within hearing of the mutter of the monks of Ara Coeli, and how he finished it one night by Lake Geneva, and laid his pen down and walked forth and saw the stars above his terrace at Lausanne.

The memoirs of Alfieri and Goldoni are not deficient in any of the characteristics of good autobiography. They seem to bear upon their face the stamp of truthfulness, they illustrate their authors' lives with marvellous lucidity, and they are full of interest as stories. But it is to the contrast which they present that our attention should be chiefly drawn. Other biographies may be as interesting and amusing. None show in a more marked manner two distinct natures endowed with genius for one art, and yet designed in every possible particular for

different branches of that art. Alfieri embodies Tragedy ; Goldoni is the spirit of Comedy. They are both Italians : their tragedies and comedies are by no means cosmopolitan ; but this national identity of character only renders more remarkable the individual divergences by which they were impelled into their different paths. Thalia seems to have made the one, body, soul, and spirit ; and Melpomene the other ; each goddess launched her favourite into circumstances suited to the evolution of his genius, and presided over his development, so that at his death she might exclaim,—Behold the living model of my Art !

Goldoni was born at Venice in the year 1707 ; he had already reached celebrity when Alfieri saw the light for the first time, in 1749, at Asti. Goldoni's grandfather was a native of Modena, who had settled in Venice, and there lived with the prodigality of a rich and ostentatious 'bourgeois.' 'Amid riot and luxury did I enter the world,' says the poet, after enumerating the banquets and theatrical displays with which the old Goldoni entertained his guests in his Venetian palace and country-house. Venice at that date was certainly the proper birthplace for a comic poet. The splendour of the Renaissance had thoroughly habituated her nobles to pleasures of the sense, and had enervated their proud, maritime character, while the great name of the republic robbed them of the caution for which they used to be conspicuous. Yet the real strength of Venice was almost spent, and nothing remained but outward insolence and prestige. Everything was gay about Goldoni in his earliest childhood. Puppet-shows were built to amuse him by his grandfather. 'My mother,' he says, 'took charge of my education, and my father of my amusements.'

Let us turn to the opening scene in Alfieri's life, and mark the difference. A father above sixty, 'noble, wealthy, and respectable,' who died before his son had reached the age of one year old. A mother devoted to religion, the widow of one

marquis, and after the death of a second husband, Alfieri's father, married for the third time to a nobleman of ancient birth. These were Alfieri's parents. He was born in a solemn palazzo in the country town of Asti, and at the age of five already longed for death as an escape from disease and other earthly troubles. So noble and so wealthy was the youthful poet that an abbé was engaged to carry out his education, but not to teach him more than a count should know. Except this worthy man he had no companions whatever. Strange ideas possessed the boy. He ruminated on his melancholy, and when eight years old attempted suicide. At this age he was sent to the academy at Turin, attended, as befitted a lad of his rank, by a man-servant, who was to remain and wait on him at school. Alfieri stayed here several years without revisiting his home, tyrannised over by the valet who added to his grandeur, constantly subject to sickness, and kept in almost total ignorance by his incompetent preceptors. The gloom and pride and stoicism of his temperament were augmented by this unnatural discipline. His spirit did not break, but took a haughtier and more disdainful tone. He became familiar with misfortunes. He learned to brood over and intensify his passions. Every circumstance of his life seemed strung up to a tragic pitch. This at least is the impression which remains upon our mind after reading in his memoirs the narrative of what must in many of its details have been a common schoolboy's life at that time.

Meanwhile, what had become of young Goldoni? His boyhood was as thoroughly plebeian, various, and comic, as Alfieri's had been patrician, monotonous, and tragical. Instead of one place of residence, we read of twenty. Scrape succeeds to scrape, adventure to adventure. Knowledge of the world, and some book learning also, flow in upon the boy, and are eagerly caught up by him and heterogeneously amalgamated in his mind. Alfieri learned nothing, wrote nothing, in his youth,

and heard his parents say—‘A nobleman need never strive to be a doctor of the faculties.’ Goldoni had a little medicine and much law thrust upon him. At eight he wrote a comedy, and ere long began to read the plays of Plautus, Terence, Aristophanes, and Machiavelli. Between the nature of the two poets there was a marked and characteristic difference as to their mode of labour and of acquiring knowledge. Both of them loved fame, and wrought for it ; but Alfieri did so from a sense of pride and a determination to excel ; while Goldoni loved the approbation of his fellows, sought their compliments, and basked in the sunshine of smiles. Alfieri wrote with labour. Each tragedy he composed went through a triple process of composition, and received frequent polishing when finished. Goldoni dashed off his pieces with the greatest ease on every possible subject. He once produced sixteen comedies in one theatrical season. Alfieri’s were like lion’s whelps—brought forth with difficulty, and at long intervals ; Goldoni’s, like the brood of a hare—many, frequent, and as agile as their parent. Alfieri amassed knowledge scrupulously, but with infinite toil. He mastered Greek and Hebrew when he was past forty. Goldoni never gave himself the least trouble to learn anything, but trusted to the ready wit, good memory, and natural powers, which helped him in a hundred strange emergencies. Power of will and pride sustained the one ; facility and a good-humoured vanity the other. This contrast was apparent at a very early age. We have seen how Alfieri passed his time at Turin, in a kind of aristocratic prison of educational ignorance. Goldoni’s grandfather died when he was five years old, and left his family in great embarrassment. The poet’s father went off to practise medicine at Perugia. His son followed him, acquired the rudiments of knowledge in that town, and then proceeded to study philosophy alone at Rimini. There was no man-servant or academy in his case. He was far too plebeian and too free. The boy lodged with a merchant,

and got some smattering of Thomas Aquinas and the Peripatetics into his small brain, while he contrived to form a friendship with an acting company. They were on the wing for Venice in a coasting boat, which would touch at Chiozza, where Goldoni's mother then resided. The boy pleased them. Would he like the voyage? This offer seemed too tempting, and away he rushed, concealed himself on board, and made one of a merry motley shipload. 'Twelve persons, actors as well as actresses, a prompter, a machinist, a storekeeper, eight domestics, four chambermaids, two nurses, children of every age, cats, dogs, monkeys, parrots, birds, pigeons, and a lamb; it was another Noah's ark.' The young poet felt at home; how could a comic poet feel otherwise? They laughed, they sang, they danced; they ate and drank, and played at cards. 'Macaroni! Every one fell on it, and three dishes were devoured. We had also alamode beef, cold fowl, a loin of veal, a dessert, and excellent wine. What a charming dinner! No cheer like a good appetite.' Their harmony, however, was disturbed. The 'première amoureuse,' who, in spite of her rank and title, was ugly and cross, and required to be coaxed with cups of chocolate, lost her cat. She tried to kill the whole boat-load of beasts—cats, dogs, monkeys, parrots, pigeons, even the lamb stood in danger of her wrath. A regular quarrel ensued, was somehow set at peace, and all began to laugh again. This is a sample of Goldoni's youth. Comic pleasures, comic dangers; nothing deep or lasting, but light and shadow cheerfully distributed, clouds lowering with storm, a distant growl of thunder, then a gleam of light and sunshine breaking overhead. He gets articled to an attorney at Venice, then goes to study law at Pavia; studies society instead, and flirts, and finally is expelled for writing satires. Then he takes a turn at medicine with his father in Friuli, and acts as clerk to the criminal chancellor at Chiozza.

Every employment seems easy to him, but he really cares

for none but literature. He spends all his spare time in reading and in amusements, and begins to write a tragic opera. This proves, however, eminently unsuccessful, and he burns it in a comic fit of anger. One laughable love-affair in which he engaged at Udine exhibits his adventures in their truly comic aspect. It reminds us of the scene in 'Don Giovanni,' where Leporello personates the Don and deceives Donna Elvira. Goldoni had often noticed a beautiful young lady at church and on the public drives: she was attended by a waiting-maid, who soon perceived that her mistress had excited the young man's admiration, and who promised to befriend him in his suit. Goldoni was told to repair at night to the palace of his mistress, and to pour his passion forth beneath her window. Impatiently he waited for the trysting hour, conned his lovesentences, and gloried in the romance of the adventure. When night came, he found the window, and a veiled figure of a lady in the moonlight, whom he supposed at once to be his mistress. Her he eloquently addressed in the true style of Romeo's rapture, and she answered him. Night after night this happened, but sometimes he was a little troubled by a sound of ill-suppressed laughter interrupting the *tête-à-tête*. Meanwhile Teresa, the waiting-maid, received from his hands costly presents for her mistress, and made him promises on her part in exchange. As she proved unable to fulfil them, Goldoni grew suspicious, and at last discovered that the veiled figure to whom he had poured out his tale of love was none other than Teresa, and that the laughter had proceeded from her mistress, whom the faithless waiting-maid regaled at her lover's expense. Thus ended this ridiculous matter. Goldoni was not, however, cured by his experience. One other love-affair rendered Udine too hot to hold him, and in consequence of a third he had to fly from Venice just when he was beginning to flourish there. At length he married comfortably and suitably, settling down into a quiet life with a woman whom, if

he did not love her with passion, he at least respected and admired. Goldoni, in fact, had no real passion in his nature.

Alfieri, on the other hand, was given over to volcanic ebullitions of the most ungovernable hate and affection, joy and sorrow. The chains of love which Goldoni courted so willingly, Alfieri regarded with the greatest shyness. But while Goldoni healed his heart of all its bruises in a week or so, the tragic poet bore about him wounds that would not close. He enumerates three serious passions which possessed his whole nature, and at times deprived him almost of his reason. A Dutch lady first won his heart, and when he had to leave her, Alfieri suffered so intensely that he never opened his lips during the course of a long journey through Germany, Switzerland, and Piedmont. Fevers, and suicides attempted but interrupted, marked the termination of this tragic amour. His second passion had for its object an English lady, with whose injured husband he fought a duel, although his collar-bone was broken at the time. The lady proved unworthy of Alfieri as well as of her husband, and the poet left her in a most deplorable state of hopelessness and intellectual prostration. At last he formed a permanent affection for the wife of Prince Charles Edward, the Countess of Albany, in close friendship with whom he lived after her husband's death. The society of this lady gave him perfect happiness ; but it was founded on her lofty beauty, the pathos of her situation, and her intellectual qualities. Melpomene presided at this union, while Thalia blessed the nuptials of Goldoni. How characteristic also were the adventures which these two pairs of lovers encountered ! Goldoni once carried his wife upon his back across two rivers in their flight from the Spanish to the Austrian camp at Rimini, laughing and groaning, and perceiving the humour of his situation all the time. Alfieri, on an occasion of even greater difficulty, was stopped with his illustrious friend at the gates of Paris in 1792. They were flying in post-chaises, with their

servants and their baggage, from the devoted city, when a troop of *sansculottes* rushed on them, surged around the carriage, called them aristocrats, and tried to drag them off to prison. Alfieri with his tall gaunt figure, pallid face, and red voluminous hair, stormed, raged, and raised his deep bass voice above the tumult. For half an hour he fought with them, then made his coachmen gallop through the gates, and scarcely halted till they got to Gravelines. By this prompt movement they escaped arrest and death at Paris. These two scenes would make agreeable companion pictures : Goldoni staggering beneath his wife across the muddy bed of an Italian stream—the smiling writer of agreeable plays, with his half-tearful helpmate ludicrous in her disasters ; Alfieri mad with rage among Parisian Mænads, his princess quaking in her carriage, the air hoarse with cries, and death and safety trembling in the balance. It is no wonder that the one man wrote ‘*La Donna di Garbo*’ and the ‘*Cortese Veneziano*,’ while the other was in-diting essays on Tyranny and dramas of ‘*Antigone*,’ ‘*Timoleon*,’ and ‘*Brutus*.’

The difference between the men is seen no less remarkably in regard to courage. Alfieri was a reckless rider, and astonished even English huntsmen by his desperate leaps. In one of them he fell and broke his collar-bone, but not the less he held his tryst with a fair lady, climbed her park gates, and fought a duel with her husband. Goldoni was a pantaloon for cowardice. In the room of an inn at Desenzano which he occupied together with a female fellow-traveller, an attempt was made to rob them by a thief at night. All Goldoni was able to do consisted in crying out for help, and the lady called him ‘*M. l’Abbé*’ ever after for his want of pluck. Goldoni must have been by far the more agreeable of the two. In all his changes from town to town of Italy he found amusement and brought gaiety. The sights, the theatres, the society aroused his curiosity. He trembled with excitement at the

performance of his pieces, made friends with the actors, taught them, and wrote parts to suit their qualities. At Pisa he attended as a stranger the meeting of the Arcadian Academy, and at its close attracted all attention to himself by his clever improvisation. He was in truth a ready-witted man, pliable, full of resource, bred half a valet, half a Roman *græculus*. Alfieri saw more of Europe than Goldoni. France, Germany, Holland, Switzerland, England, Spain, all parts of Italy he visited with restless haste. From land to land he flew, seeking no society, enjoying nothing, dashing from one inn door to another with his servants and his carriages, and thinking chiefly of the splendid stud of horses which he took about with him upon his travels. He was a lonely, stiff, self-engrossed, indomitable man. He could not rest at home : he could not bear to be the vassal of a king and breathe the air of courts. So he lived always on the wing, and ended by exiling himself from Sardinia in order to escape the trammels of paternal government. As for his tragedies, he wrote them to win laurels from posterity. He never cared to see them acted ; he bullied even his printers and correctors ; he cast a glove down in defiance of his critics. Goldoni sought the smallest meed of approbation. It pleased him hugely in his old age to be Italian master to a French princess. Alfieri openly despised the public. Goldoni wrote because he liked to write ; Alfieri, for the sake of proving his superior powers. Against Alfieri's hatred of Turin and its trivial solemnities, we have to set Goldoni's love of Venice and its petty pleasures. He would willingly have drunk chocolate and played at dominoes or picquet all his life on the Piazza di San Marco, when Alfieri was crossing the sierras on his Andalusian horse, and devouring a frugal meal of rice in solitude. Goldoni glided through life an easy man, with genial, venial thoughts ; with a clear, gay, gentle temper ; a true sense of what is good and just ; and a heart that loved diffusively, if not too warmly. Many were the

checks and obstacles thrown on his path ; but round them or above them he passed nimbly, without scar or scathe. Poverty went close behind him, but he kept her off, and never felt the pinch of need. Alfieri strained and strove against the barriers of fate ; a sombre, rugged man, proud, candid, and self-confident, who broke or bent all opposition ; now moving solemnly with tragic pomp, now dashing passionately forward by the might of will. Goldoni drew his inspirations from the moment and surrounding circumstances. Alfieri pursued an ideal, slowly formed, but strongly fashioned and resolutely followed. Of wealth he had plenty and to spare, but he disregarded it, and was a Stoic in his mode of life. He was an unworldly man, and hated worldliness. Goldoni, but for his authorship, would certainly have grown a prosperous advocate, and died of gout in Venice. Goldoni liked smart clothes ; Alfieri went always in black. Goldoni's fits of spleen—for he *was* melancholy now and then—lasted a day or two, and disappeared before a change of place. Alfieri dragged his discontent about with him all over Europe, and let it interrupt his work and mar his intellect for many months together. Alfieri was a patriot, and hated France. Goldoni never speaks of politics, and praises Paris as a heaven on earth. The genial moralising of the latter appears childish by the side of Alfieri's terse philosophy and pregnant remarks on the development of character. What suits the page of Plautus would look poor in *Œdipus* or *Agamemnon*. Goldoni's memoirs are diffuse and flippant in their light French dress. They seem written to please. Alfieri's Italian style marches with dignity and Latin terseness. He rarely condescends to smile. He writes to instruct the world and to satisfy himself. Grim humour sometimes flashes out, as when he tells the story of the Order of Homer, which he founded. How different from Goldoni's naïve account of his little ovation in the theatre at Paris !

But it would be idle to carry on this comparison, already

tedious. The life of Goldoni was one long scene of shifts and jests, of frequent triumphs and some failures, of lessons hard at times, but kindly. Passions and *ennui*, flashes of heroic patriotism, constant suffering and stoical endurance, art and love idealised, fill up the life of Alfieri. Goldoni clung much to his fellow-men, and shared their pains and pleasures. Alfieri spent many of his years in almost absolute solitude. On the whole character and deeds of the one man was stamped Comedy : the other was own son of Tragedy.

If, after reading the autobiographies of Alfieri and Goldoni, we turn to the perusal of their plays, we shall perceive that there is no better commentary on the works of an artist than his life, and no better life than one written by himself. The old style of criticism, which strove to separate an author's productions from his life, and even from the age in which he lived, to set up an arbitrary canon of taste, and to select one or two great painters or poets as ideals because they seemed to illustrate that canon, has passed away. We are beginning to feel that art is a part of history and of physiology. That is to say, the artist's work can only be rightly understood by studying his age and temperament. Goldoni's versatility and want of depth induced him to write sparkling comedies. The merry life men passed at Venice in its years of decadence proved favourable to his genius. Alfieri's melancholy and passionate qualities, fostered in solitude, and aggravated by a tyranny he could not bear, led him irresistibly to tragic composition. Though a noble, his nobility only added to his pride, and insensibly his intellect had been imbued with the democratic sentiments which were destined to shake Europe in his lifetime. This, in itself, was a tragic circumstance, bringing him into close sympathy with the Brutus, the Prometheus, the Timoleon of ancient history. Goldoni's *bourgeoisie*, in the atmosphere of which he was born and bred, was essentially comic. The true comedy of manners, which is quite distinct from Shakspere's fancy or from Aristophanic

satire, is always laid in middle life. Though Goldoni tried to write tragedies, they were unimpassioned, dull, and tame. He lacked altogether the fire, high-wrought nobility of sentiment, and sense of form essential for tragic art. On the other hand, Alfieri composed some comedies before his death which were devoid of humour, grace, and lightness. A strange elephantine eccentricity is their utmost claim to comic character. Indeed, the temper of Alfieri, ever in extremes, led him even to exaggerate the qualities of tragedy. He carried its severity to a pitch of dulness and monotony. His *chiaroscuro* was too strong; virtue and villainy appearing in pure black and white upon his pages. His hatred of tyrants induced him to transgress the rules of probability, so that it has been well said that if his wicked kings had really had such words of scorn and hatred thrown at them by their victims, they were greatly to be pitied. On the other hand, his pithy laconisms have often a splendidly tragical effect. There is nothing in the modern drama more rhetorically impressive, though spasmodic, than the well-known dialogue between Antigone and Creon :—

‘Cr. Scegliesti?

‘Ant. Ho scelto.

‘Cr. Emon?

‘Ant. Morte.

‘Cr. L'avrai !’

Goldoni’s comedies, again, have not enough of serious thought or of true creative imagination to be works of high art. They lean too much to the side of farce ; they have none of the tragic salt which gives a dignity to Tartuffe. They are, in a word, almost too euthistically comic.

The contrast between these authors might lead us to raise the question long ago discussed by Socrates at Agathon’s banquet—Can the same man write both comedies and tragedies? We in England are accustomed to read the serious and comic plays of Shakspere, Fletcher, Jonson, and to think that

one poet could excel in either branch. The custom of the Elizabethan theatre obliged this double authorship ; yet it must be confessed that Shakspere's comedies are not such comedies as Greek or Roman or French critics would admit. They are works of the purest imagination, wholly free from the laws of this world ; while the tragedies of Fletcher have a melodramatic air equally at variance with the classical Melpomene. It may very seriously be doubted whether the same mind could produce, with equal power, a comedy like the '*Cortese Veneziano*' and a tragedy like Alfieri's '*Brutus*.' At any rate, returning to our old position, we find in these two men the very opposite conditions of dramatic genius. They are, as it were, specimens prepared by Nature for the instruction of those who analyse genius in its relations to temperament, to life, and to external circumstances.

CREMA AND THE CRUCIFIX.

Few people visit Crema. It is a little country town of Lombardy, between Cremona and Treviglio, with no historic memories but very misty ones belonging to the days of the Visconti dynasty. On every side around the city walls stretch smiling vineyards and rich meadows, where the elms are married to the mulberry-trees by long festoons of foliage hiding purple grapes, where the sunflowers droop their heavy golden heads among tall stems of millet and gigantic maize, and here and there a rice-crop ripens in the marshy loam. In vintage time the carts, drawn by their white oxen, come creaking townward in the evening, laden with blue bunches. Down the long straight roads, between rows of poplars, they creep on ; and on the shafts beneath the pyramid of fruit lie contadini stained with lees of wine. Far off across that ‘waveless sea’ of Lombardy, which has been the battle-field of countless generations, rise the dim grey Alps, or else pearly domes of thunder-clouds in gleaming masses over some tall solitary tower. Such backgrounds, full of peace, suggestive of almost infinite distance, and dignified with colours of incomparable depth and breadth, the Venetian painters loved. No landscape in Europe is more wonderful than this—thrice wonderful in the vastness of its arching heavens, in the stillness of its level plain, and in the bulwark of huge crested mountains, reared afar like bastions against the northern sky.

The little town is all alive in this September weather. At

every corner of the street, under rustling abeles and thick-foliaged planes, at the doors of palaces and in the yards of inns, men, naked from the thighs downward, are treading the red must into vats and tuns ; while their mild-eyed oxen lie beneath them in the road, peaceably chewing the cud between one journey to the vineyard and another. It must not be imagined that the scene of Alma Tadema's 'Roman Vintage,' or what we fondly picture to our fancy of the Athenian Lenaea, is repeated in the streets of Crema. This modern treading of the wine-press is a very prosaic affair. The town reeks with a sour smell of old casks and crushed grape-skins, and the men and women at work bear no resemblance whatever to Bacchus and his crew. Yet even as it is, the Lombard vintage, beneath floods of sunlight and a pure blue sky, is beautiful ; and he who would fain make acquaintance with Crema, should time his entry into the old town, if possible, on some still golden afternoon of autumn. It is then, if ever, that he will learn to love the glowing brickwork of its churches and the quaint terra-cotta traceries that form its chief artistic charm.

How the unique brick architecture of the Lombard cities took its origin—whether from the precepts of Byzantine aliens in the earliest middle ages, or from the native instincts of a mixed race composed of Gallic, Ligurian, Roman, and Teutonic elements, under the leadership of Longobardic rulers—is a question for antiquarians to decide. There can, however, be no doubt that the monuments of the Lombard style, as they now exist, are no less genuinely local, no less characteristic of the country they adorn, no less indigenous to the soil they sprang from, than the Attic colonnades of Mnesicles and Ictinus. What the marble quarries of Pentelicus were to the Athenian builders, the clay beneath their feet was to those Lombard craftsmen. From it they fashioned structures as enduring, towers as majestic, and cathedral aisles as solemn, as were ever wrought from chiselled stone. There is a true sym-

pathy between those buildings and the Lombard landscape, which by itself might suffice to prove the originality of their almost unknown architects. The rich colour of the baked clay—finely modulated from a purplish red, through russet, crimson, pink, and orange, to pale yellow and dull grey—harmonises with the brilliant greenery of Lombard vegetation and with the deep azure of the distant Alpine range. Reared aloft above the flat expanse of plain, those square *torroni*, tapering into octagons and crowned with slender cones, break the long sweeping lines and infinite horizons with a contrast that affords relief, and yields a resting place to tired eyes ; while, far away, seen haply from some bridge above Ticino, or some high-built palace loggia, they gleam like columns of pale rosy fire against the front of mustering storm-clouds blue with rain. In that happy orchard of Italy, a pergola of vines in leaf, a clump of green acacias, and a campanile soaring above its church roof, brought into chance combination with the reaches of the plain and the dim mountain range, make up a picture eloquent in its suggestive beauty.

Those ancient builders wrought cunningly with their material. The bricks are fashioned and fixed to last for all time. Exposed to the icy winds of a Lombard winter, to the fierce fire of a Lombard summer, and to the moist vapours of a Lombard autumn ; neglected by unheeding generations ; with flowers clustering in their crannies, and birds nesting in their eaves, and mason-bees filling the delicate network of their traceries—they still present angles as sharp as when they were but finished, and joints as nice as when the mortar dried in the first months of their building. This immunity from age and injury they owe partly to the imperishable nature of baked clay ; partly to the care of the artists who selected and mingled the right sorts of earth, burned them with scrupulous attention, and fitted them together with a patience born of loving service. Each member of the edifice was designed with a view to its

ultimate place. The proper curve was ascertained for cylindrical columns and for rounded arches. Larger bricks were moulded for the supporting walls, and lesser pieces were adapted to the airy vaults and lanterns. In the brickfield and the kiln the whole church was planned and wrought out in its details, before the hands that made a unity of all these scattered elements were set to the work of raising it in air. When they came to put the puzzle together, they laid each brick against its neighbour, filling up the almost imperceptible interstices with liquid cement composed of quick-lime and fine sand in water. After five centuries the seams between the layers of bricks that make the bell-tower of S. Gottardo at Milan, yield no point of vantage to the penknife or the chisel.

Nor was it in their welding of the bricks alone that these craftsmen showed their science. They were wont to enrich the surface with marble, sparingly but effectively employed—as in those slender detached columns, which add such beauty to the octagon of S. Gottardo, or in the string-courses of strange beasts and reptiles that adorn the church fronts of Pavia. They called to their aid the *mandorlato* of Verona, supporting their porch pillars on the backs of couchant lions, inserting polished slabs on their façades, and building huge sarcophagi into their cloister alleys. Between terra-cotta and this marble of Verona there exists a deep and delicate affinity. It took the name of *mandorlato*, I suppose, from a resemblance to almond blossoms. But it is far from having the simple beauty of a single hue. Like all noble veined stones, it passes by a series of modulations and gradations through a gamut of associated rather than contrasted tints. Not the pink of the almond blossom only, but the creamy whiteness of the almond kernel, and the dull yellow of the almond nut may be found in it; and yet these colours are so blent and blurred to all-pervading mellowness, that nowhere is there any shock of contrast or violence of a preponderating tone. The veins

which run in labyrinths of crossing, curving, and contorted lines all over its smooth surface add, no doubt, to this effect of unity. The polish, lastly, which it takes, makes the *mandorlato* shine like a smile upon the sober face of the brickwork : for, serviceable as terra-cotta is for nearly all artistic purposes, it cannot reflect light or gain the illumination which comes from surface brightness.

What the clay can do almost better than any crystalline material, may be seen in the mouldings so characteristic of Lombard architecture. Geometrical patterns of the rarest and most fanciful device ; scrolls of acanthus foliage, and traceries of tendrils ; Cupids swinging in festoons of vines ; angels joining hands in dance, with fluttering skirts and windy hair, and mouths that symbol singing ; grave faces of old men and beautiful profiles of maidens leaning from medallions ; wide-winged genii filling the spandrils of cloister arches, and cherubs clustered in the rondure of rose-windows—ornaments like these, wrought from the plastic clay, and adapted with true taste to the requirements of the architecture, are familiar to every one who has studied the church front of Crema, the cloisters of the Certosa, the courts of the Ospedale Maggiore at Milan, or the public palace of Cremona.

If the *mandorlato* gives a smile to those majestic Lombard buildings, the terra-cotta decorations add the element of life and movement. The thought of the artist in its first freshness and vivacity is felt in them. They have all the spontaneity of improvisation, the seductive melody of unpremeditated music. Moulding the supple earth with ‘hand obedient to the brain,’ the *plasticatore* has impressed his most fugitive dreams of beauty on it without effort ; and what it cost him but a few fatigueless hours to fashion, the steady heat of the furnace has gifted with imperishable life. Such work, no doubt, has the defects of its qualities. As there are few difficulties to overcome, it suffers from a fatal facility—*nec pluteum cædit nec*

demorsos sapit unguis. It is therefore apt to be unequal, touching at times the highest point of inspiration, as in the angels of Guccio at Perugia, and sinking not unfrequently into the commonplace of easy-going triviality, as in the common floral traceries of Milanese windows. But it is never laboured, never pedantic, never dulled by the painful effort to subdue an obstinate material to the artist's will. If marble is required to develop the strength of the few supreme sculptors, terra-cotta saves intact the fancies of a crowd of lesser men.

When we reflect that all the force, solemnity, and beauty of the Lombard buildings was evoked from clay, we learn from them this lesson: that the thought of man needs neither precious material nor yet stubborn substance for the production of enduring masterpieces. The red earth was enough for God when He made man in His own image; and mud dried in the sun suffices for the artist, who is next to God in his creative faculty—since *non merita nome di creatore se non Iddio ed il poeta.* After all, what is more everlasting than terra-cotta? The hobnails of the boys who ran across the brickfields in the Roman town of Silchester, may still be seen, mingled with the impress of the feet of dogs and hoofs of goats, in the tiles discovered there. Such traces might serve as a metaphor for the footfall of artistic genius, when the form-giver has stamped his thought upon the moist clay, and fire has made that imprint permanent.

Of all these Lombard edifices, none is more beautiful than the Cathedral of Crema, with its delicately-finished campanile, built of choicely-tinted yellow bricks, and ending in a lantern of the gracefulest, most airily capricious fancy. This bell-tower does not display the gigantic force of Cremona's famous *torrazzo*, shooting 396 feet into blue ether from the city square; nor can it rival the octagon of S. Gottardo for warmth of hue. Yet it has a character of elegance, combined with boldness of invention, that justifies the citizens of Crema in their pride.

It is unique ; and he who has not seen it does not know the whole resources of the Lombard style. The façade of the Cathedral displays that peculiar blending of Byzantine or Romanesque round arches with Gothic details in the windows, and with the acute angle of the central pitch, which forms the characteristic quality of the late *trecento* Lombard manner. In its combination of purity and richness it corresponds to the best age of decorated work in English Gothic. What, however, strikes a Northern observer is the strange detachment of this elaborate façade from the main structure of the church. Like a frontispiece cut out of cardboard and pierced with ornamental openings, it shoots far above the low roof of the nave ; so that at night the moon, rising above the southern aisle, shines through its topmost window, and casts the shadow of its tracery upon the pavement of the square. This is a constructive blemish to which the Italians in no part of the peninsula were sensitive. They seem to have regarded their church-fronts as independent of the edifice, capable of separate treatment, and worthy in themselves of being made the subject of decorative skill.

In the so-called Santuario of Crema—a circular church dedicated to S. Maria della Croce, outside the walls—the Lombard style has been adapted to the manner of the Mid Renaissance. This church was raised in the last years of the fifteenth century by Gian Battista Battagli, an architect of Lodi, who followed the pure rules of taste, bequeathed to North Italian builders by Bramante. The beauty of the edifice is due entirely to its tranquil dignity and harmony of parts, the lightness of its circling loggia, and the just proportion maintained between the central structure and the four projecting porticoes. The sharp angles of these vestibules afford a contrast to the simplicity of the main building, while their clustered cupolas assist the general effect of roundness aimed at by the architect. Such a church as this proves how much may be achieved by

the happy distribution of architectural masses. It was the triumph of the best Renaissance style to attain lucidity of treatment, and to produce beauty by geometrical proportion. When Leo Battista Alberti complained to his friend, Matteo di Bastia, that a slight alteration of the curves in his design for S. Francesco at Rimini would 'spoil his music,' *ciò che tu muti discorda tutta quella musica*, this is what he meant. The melody of lines and the harmony of parts made a symphony to his eyes no less agreeable than a concert of tuned lutes and voices to his ears ; and to this concord he was so sensitive that any deviation was a discord.

'After visiting the churches of Crema and sauntering about the streets awhile, there is nothing left to do but to take refuge in the old Albergo del Pozzo. This is one of those queer Italian inns, which carry you away at once into a scene of Goldoni. It is part of some palace, where nobles housed their *bravi* in the sixteenth century, and which the lesser people of to-day have turned into a dozen habitations. Its great stone staircase leads to a saloon upon which the various bed-chambers open ; and round its courtyard runs an open balcony, and from the court grows up a fig-tree poking ripe fruit against a bedroom window. Oleanders in tubs and red salvias in pots, and kitchen herbs in boxes, flourish on the pavement, where the ostler comes to wash his carriages, and where the barber shaves the poodle of the house. Visitors to the Albergo del Pozzo are invariably asked if they have seen the Museo ; and when they answer in the negative, they are conducted with some ceremony to a large room on the ground-floor of the inn, looking out upon the courtyard and the fig-tree. It was here that I gained the acquaintance of Signor Folcioni, and became possessor of an object that has made the memory of Crema doubly interesting to me ever since.'

When we entered the Museo, we found a little old man, gentle, grave, and unobtrusive, varnishing the ugly portrait of

some Signor of the Cinque Cento. Round the walls hung pictures, of mediocre value, in dingy frames ; but all of them bore sounding titles. Titians, Leonardos, Guido Renis, and Luinis, looked down and waited for a purchaser. In truth this museum was a *bric-à-brac* shop of a sort that is common enough in Italy, where treasures of old lace, glass, armour, furniture, and tapestry, may still be met with. Signor Folcioni began by pointing out the merits of his pictures ; and after making due allowance for his zeal as amateur and dealer, it was possible to join in some of his eulogiums. A would-be Titian, for instance, bought in Verona from a noble house in ruins, showed Venetian wealth of colour in its gemmy greens and lucid crimsons shining from a background deep and glowing. Then he led us to a walnut-wood bureau of late Renaissance work, profusely carved with nymphs and Cupids, and armed men, among festoons of fruits embossed in high relief. Deeply drilled worm-holes set a seal of antiquity upon the blooming faces and luxuriant garlands—like the touch of Time who ‘delves the parallels in beauty’s brow.’ On the shelves of an ebony cabinet close by he showed us a row of cups cut out of rock-crystal and mounted in gilt silver, with heaps of engraved gems, old snuff-boxes, coins, medals, sprays of coral, and all the indescribable lumber that one age flings aside as worthless for the next to pick up from the dust-heap and regard as precious. Surely the genius of culture in our century might be compared to a *chiffonnier* of Paris, who, when the night has fallen, goes into the streets, bag on back and lantern in hand, to rake up the waifs and strays a day of whirling life has left him.

The next curiosity was an ivory carving of S. Anthony preaching to the fishes, so fine and small you held it on your palm, and used a lens to look at it. Yet there stood the Santo gesticulating, and there were the fishes in rows—the little fishes first, and then the middle-sized, and last of all the great big

fishes almost out at sea, with their heads above the water and their mouths wide open, just as the *Fioretti di San Francesco* describes them. After this came some original drawings of doubtful interest, and then a case of fifty-two *nielli*. These were of unquestionable value; for has not Cicognara engraved them on a page of his classic monograph? The thin silver plates, over which once passed the burin of Maso Finiguerra, cutting lines finer than hairs, and setting here a shadow in dull acid-eaten grey, and there a high light of exquisite polish, were far more delicate than any proofs impressed from them. These frail masterpieces of Florentine art—the first beginnings of line engraving—we held in our hands while Signor Folcioni read out Cicognara's commentary in a slow impressive voice, breaking off now and then to point at the originals before us.

The sun had set, and the room was almost dark, when he laid his book down, and said: 'I have not much left to show—yet stay! Here are still some little things of interest.' He then opened the door into his bedroom, and took down from a nail above his bed a wooden Crucifix. Few things have fascinated me more than this Crucifix—produced without parade, half negligently, from the dregs of his collection by a dealer in old curiosities at Crema. The cross was, or *is*—for it is lying on the table now before me—twenty-one inches in length, made of strong wood, covered with coarse yellow parchment, and shod at the four ends with brass. The Christ is roughly hewn in reddish wood, coloured scarlet, where the blood streams from the five wounds. Over the head an oval medallion, nailed into the cross, serves as framework to a miniature of the Madonna, softly smiling with a Correggiesque simper. The whole Crucifix is not a work of art, but such as may be found in every convent. Its date cannot be earlier than the beginning of the eighteenth century. As I held it in my hand, I thought—perhaps this has been carried to the bedside of the sick and dying; preachers have brandished it from the

pulpit over conscience-stricken congregations ; monks have knelt before it on the brick floor of their cells, and novices have kissed it in the vain desire to drown their yearnings after the relinquished world ; perhaps it has attended criminals to the scaffold, and heard the secrets of repentant murderers ; but why should it be shown me as a thing of rarity ? These thoughts passed through my mind, while Signor Folcioni quietly remarked : ‘I bought this Cross from the Frati when their convent was dissolved in Crema.’ Then he bade me turn it round, and showed a little steel knob fixed into the back between the arms. This was a spring. He pressed it, and the upper and lower parts of the cross came asunder ; and holding the top like a handle, I drew out as from a scabbard a sharp steel blade, concealed in the thickness of the wood, behind the very body of the agonising Christ. What had been a Crucifix became a deadly poniard in my grasp, and the rust upon it in the twilight looked like blood. ‘I have often wondered,’ said Signor Folcioni, ‘that the Frati cared to sell me this.’

There is no need to raise the question of the genuineness of this strange relic, though I confess to having had my doubts about it, or to wonder for what nefarious purposes the impious weapon was designed—whether the blade was inserted by some rascal monk who never told the tale, or whether it was used on secret service by the friars. On its surface the infernal engine carries a dark certainty of treason, sacrilege, and violence. Yet it would be wrong to incriminate the Order of S. Francis by any suspicion, and idle to seek the actual history of this mysterious weapon. A writer of fiction could indeed produce some dark tale in the style of De Stendhal’s ‘Nouvelles,’ and christen it ‘The Crucifix of Crema.’ And how delighted would Webster have been if he had chanced to hear of such a sword-sheath ! He might have placed it in the hands of Bosola for the keener torment of his Duchess. Flamineo might have used it ; or the disguised friars, who made the death-bed of Bracciano hideous,

might have plunged it in the Duke's heart after mocking his eyes with the figure of the suffering Christ. To imagine such an instrument of moral terror mingled with material violence, lay within the scope of Webster's sinister and powerful genius. But unless he had seen it with his eyes, what poet would have ventured to devise the thing and display it even in the dumb show of a tragedy? Fact is more wonderful than romance. No apocalypse of Antichrist matches what is told of Roderigo Borgia ; and the crucifix of Crema exceeds the sombre fantasy of Webster.

Whatever may be the truth about this cross, it has at any rate the value of a symbol or a metaphor. The idea which it materialises, the historical events of which it is a sign, may well arrest attention. A sword concealed in the crucifix—what emblem brings more forcibly to mind than this that two-edged glaive of persecution which Dominic unsheathed to mow down the populations of Provence and to make Spain destitute of men ? Looking upon the crucifix of Crema, we may seem to see pestilence-stricken multitudes of Moors and Jews dying on the coasts of Africa and Italy. The Spaniards enter Mexico ; and this is the cross they carry in their hands. They take possession of Peru ; and while the gentle people of the Incas come to kiss the bleeding brows of Christ, they plunge this dagger in their sides. What, again, was the temporal power of the Papacy but a sword embedded in a cross ? Each Papa Rè, when he ascended the Holy Chair, was forced to take the crucifix of Crema and to bear it till his death. A long procession of war-loving Pontiffs, levying armies and paying captains with the pence of S. Peter, in order to keep by arms the lands they had acquired by fraud, defiles before our eyes. First goes the terrible Sixtus IV., who died of grief when news was brought him that the Italian princes had made peace. He it was who sanctioned the conspiracy to murder the Medici in church, at the moment of the elevation of the Host. The brigands hired

to do this work refused at the last moment. The sacrilege appalled them. ‘Then,’ says the chronicler, ‘was found a priest, who, being used to churches, had no scruple.’ The poignard this priest carried was this crucifix of Crema. After Sixtus came the blood-stained Borgia ; and after him Julius II., whom the Romans in triumphal songs proclaimed a second Mars, and who turned, as Michelangelo expressed it, the chalices of Rome into swords and helms. Leo X., who dismembered Italy for his brother and nephew ; and Clement VII., who broke the neck of Florence and delivered the Eternal City to the spoiler, follow. Of the antinomy between the Vicariate of Christ and an earthly kingdom, incarnated by these and other Holy Fathers, what symbol could be found more fitting than a dagger with a crucifix for case and covering ?

It is not easy to think or write of these matters without rhetoric. When I laid my head upon my pillow that night in the Albergo del Pozzo at Crema, it was full of such thoughts ; and when at last sleep came, it brought with it a dream begotten doubtless by the perturbation of my fancy. For I thought that a brown Franciscan, with hollow cheeks, and eyes aflame beneath his heavy cowl, sat by my bed-side, and, as he raised the crucifix in his lean quivering hands, whispered a tale of deadly passion and of dastardly revenge. His confession carried me away to a convent garden of Palermo ; and there was love in the story, and hate that is stronger than love, and, for the ending of the whole matter, remorse which dies not even in the grave. Each new possessor of the crucifix of Crema, he told me, was forced to hear from him in dreams his dreadful history. But, since it was a dream and nothing more, why should I repeat it ! I have wandered far enough already from the vintage and the sunny churches of the little Lombard town.

BERGAMO AND BARTOLOMMEO COLLEONI.

FROM the new town of commerce to the old town of history upon the hill, the road is carried along a rampart lined with horse-chestnut trees—clumps of massy foliage, and snowy pyramids of bloom, expanded in the rapture of a southern spring. Each pair of trees between their stems and arch of intermingling leaves includes a space of plain, checkered with cloud-shadows, melting blue and green in amethystine haze. To right and left the last spurs of the Alps descend, jutting like promontories, heaving like islands from the misty breadth below : and here and there are towers, half-lost in airy azure ; and cities dwarfed to blots ; and silvery lines where rivers flow ; and distant, vapour-drowned, dim crests of Apennines. The city walls above us wave with snapdragons and iris among fig-trees sprouting from the riven stones. There are terraces over-rioted with pergolas of vine, and houses shooting forward into balconies and balustrades, from which a Romeo might launch himself at daybreak, warned by the larks song. A sudden angle in the road is turned, and we pass from air-space and freedom into the old town, beneath walls of dark brown masonry, where wild valerians light their torches of red bloom in immemorial shade. Squalor and splendour live here side by side. Grand Renaissance portals grinning with Satyr masks are flanked by tawdry frescoes shamming stone-work, or by doorways where the withered bush hangs out a promise of bad wine.

The Cappella Colleoni is our destination, that masterpiece of the sculptor-architect's craft, with its variegated marbles,—rosy

and white and creamy yellow and jet-black,—in patterns, basreliefs, pilasters, statuettes, encrusted on the fanciful domed shrine. Upon the façade are mingled, in the true Renaissance spirit of genial acceptance, motives Christian and Pagan with supreme impartiality. Medallions of emperors and gods alternate with virtues, angels and cupids in a maze of loveliest arabesque ; and round the base of the building are told two stories—the one of Adam from his creation to his fall, the other of Hercules and his labours. Italian craftsmen of the ‘quattro cento’ were not averse to setting thus together, in one framework, the myths of our first parents and Alcmena’s son : partly perhaps because both subjects gave scope to the free treatment of the nude ; but partly also, we may venture to surmise, because the heroism of Hellas counterbalanced the sin of Eden. Here then we see how Adam and Eve were made and tempted and expelled from Paradise and set to labour, how Cain killed Abel, and Lamech slew a man to his hurt, and Isaac was offered on the mountain. The tale of human sin and the promise of redemption are epitomized in twelve of the sixteen basreliefs. The remaining four show Hercules wrestling with Antæus, taming the Nemean lion, extirpating the Hydra, and bending to his will the bull of Crete. Labour, appointed for a punishment to Adam, becomes a title to immortality for the hero. The dignity of man is reconquered by prowess for the Greek, as it is repurchased for the Christian by vicarious suffering. Many may think this interpretation of Amadeo’s basreliefs far-fetched : yet, such as it is, it agrees with the spirit of Humanism, bent ever on harmonising the two great traditions of the past. Of the workmanship little need be said, except that it is wholly Lombard, distinguished from the similar work of Della Quercia at Bologna and Siena by a more imperfect feeling for composition, and a lack of monumental gravity, yet graceful, rich in motives, and instinct with a certain wayward improvvisatore charm.

This Chapel was built by the great Condottiere Bartolommeo Colleoni, to be the monument of his puissance even in the grave. It had been the Sacristy of S. Maria Maggiore, which, when the Consiglio della Misericordia refused it to him for his half proud, half pious purpose, he took and held by force. The structure, of costliest materials, reared by Gian Antonio Amadeo, cost him 50,000 golden florins. An equestrian statue of gilt wood, voted to him by the town of Bergamo, surmounts his monument inside the Chapel. This was the work of two German masters, called 'Sisto figlio di Enrico Syri da Norimberga,' and 'Leonardo Tedesco.' The tomb itself is of marble, executed for the most part in a Lombard style resembling Amadeo's, but scarcely worthy of his genius. The whole effect is disappointing. Five figures representing Mars, Hercules, and three sons-in-law of Colleoni, who surround the sarcophagus of the buried general, are indeed almost grotesque. The angularity and crumpled draperies of the Milanese manner, when so exaggerated, produce an impression of caricature. Yet many subordinate details—a row of *putti* in a Cinque Cento frieze, for instance—and much of the low relief work—especially the Crucifixion with its characteristic episodes of the fainting Maries and the soldiers casting dice—are lovely in their unaffected Lombardism.

There is another portrait of Colleoni in a round above the great door, executed with spirit, though in a *bravura* style that curiously anticipates the decline of Italian sculpture. Gaunt, hollow-eyed, with prominent cheek bones and strong jaws, this animated, half-length statue of the hero, bears the stamp of a good likeness: but when or by whom it was made, I do not know.

Far more noteworthy than Colleoni's own monument is that of his daughter Medea. She died young in 1470, and her father caused her tomb, carved of Carrara marble, to be placed in the Dominican Church of Basella, which he had previously

founded. It was not until 1842 that this most precious masterpiece of Antonio Amadeo's skill was transferred to Bergamo. *Hic jacet Medea virgo.* Her hands are clasped across her breast. A robe of rich brocade, gathered to the waist and girdled, lies in simple folds upon the bier. Her throat, exceedingly long and slender, is circled with a string of pearls. Her face is not beautiful, for the features, especially the nose, are large and prominent ; but it is pure and expressive of vivid individuality. The hair curls in crisp short clusters, and the ear, fine and shaped almost like a Faun's, reveals the scrupulous fidelity of the sculptor. Italian art has, in truth, nothing more exquisite than this still sleeping figure of the girl, who, when she lived, must certainly have been so rare of type and loveable in personality. If Busti's Lancinus Curtius be the portrait of a humanist, careworn with study, burdened by the laurel leaves that were so dry and dusty—if Gaston de Foix in the Brera, smiling at death and beautiful in the cropped bloom of youth, idealise the hero of romance—if Michelangelo's *Penseroso* translate in marble the dark broodings of a despot's soul—if Della Porta's Julia Farnese be the Roman courtesan magnificently throned in nonchalance at a Pope's foot-stool—if Verocchio's Colleoni on his horse at Venice impersonate the pomp and circumstance of scientific war—surely this Medea exhales the flower-like graces, the sweet sanctities of human life, that even in that turbid age were found among high-bred Italian ladies. Such power have mighty sculptors, even in our modern world, to make the mute stone speak in poems and clasp the soul's life of a century in some five or six transcendent forms.

The Colleoni, or Coglioni, family were of considerable antiquity and well authenticated nobility in the town of Bergamo. Two lions' heads conjoined formed one of their canting ensigns ; another was borrowed from the vulgar meaning of their name. Many members of the house held

important office during the three centuries preceding the birth of the famous general, Bartolommeo. He was born in the year 1400 at Solza, in the Bergamasque Contado. His father Paolo, or Pùho as he was commonly called, was poor and exiled from the city, together with the rest of the Guelf nobles, by the Visconti. Being a man of daring spirit, and little inclined to languish in a foreign state as the dependent on some patron, Pùho formed the bold design of seizing the Castle of Trezzo. This he achieved in 1405 by fraud, and afterwards held it as his own by force. Partly with the view of establishing himself more firmly in his acquired lordship, and partly out of family affection, Pùho associated four of his first-cousins in the government of Trezzo. They repaid his kindness with an act of treason and cruelty, only too characteristic of those times in Italy. One day while he was playing at draughts in a room of the Castle, they assaulted him and killed him, seized his wife and the boy Bartolommeo, and flung them into prison. The murdered Pùho had another son, Antonio, who escaped and took refuge with Giorgio Benzone, the tyrant of Crema. After a short time the Colleoni brothers found means to assassinate him also ; therefore Bartolommeo alone, a child of whom no heed was taken, remained to be his father's avenger. He and his mother lived together in great indigence at Solza, until the lad felt strong enough to enter the service of one of the numerous petty Lombard princes, and to make himself if possible a captain of adventure. His name alone was a sufficient introduction, and the Duchy of Milan, dismembered upon the death of Gian Maria Visconti, was in such a state that all the minor despots were increasing their forces and preparing to defend by arms the fragments they had seized from the Visconti heritage. Bartolommeo therefore had no difficulty in recommending himself to Filippo d'Arcello, sometime general in the pay of the Milanese, but now the new lord of Piacenza. With this master he remained as page for two or three years,

learning the use of arms, riding, and training himself in the physical exercises which were indispensable to a young Italian soldier. Meanwhile Filippo Maria Visconti reacquired his hereditary dominions ; and at the age of twenty, Bartolommeo found it prudent to seek a patron stronger than d'Arcello. The two great Condottieri, Sforza Attendolo and Braccio, divided the military glories of Italy at this period ; and any youth who sought to rise in his profession, had to enroll himself under the banners of the one or the other. Bartolommeo chose Braccio for his master, and was enrolled among his men as a simple trooper, or *ragazzo*, with no better prospects than he could make for himself by the help of his talents and his borrowed horse and armour. Braccio at this time was in Apulia, prosecuting the war of the Neapolitan Succession disputed between Alfonso of Aragon and Louis of Anjou under the weak sovereignty of Queen Joan. On which side of a quarrel a Condottiere fought, mattered but little : so great was the confusion of Italian politics, and so complete was the egotism of these fraudulent, violent, and treacherous party leaders. Yet it may be mentioned that Braccio had espoused Alfonso's cause. Bartolommeo Colleoni early distinguished himself among the ranks of the Bracceschi. But he soon perceived that he could better his position by deserting to another camp. Accordingly he offered his services to Jacopo Caldora, one of Joan's generals, and received from him a commission of twenty men-at-arms. It may here be parenthetically said that the rank and pay of an Italian captain varied with the number of the men he brought into the field. His title 'Condottiere' was derived from the circumstance that he was said to have received a *Condotta di venti cavalli*, and so forth. Each *cavalllo* was equal to one mounted man-at-arms and two attendants, who were also called *ragazzi*. It was his business to provide the stipulated number of men, to keep them in good discipline, and to satisfy their just demands. Therefore an Italian army

at this epoch consisted of numerous small armies varying in size, each held together by personal engagements to a captain, and all dependent on the will of a general in chief, who had made a bargain with some prince or republic for supplying a fixed contingent of fighting-men. The *Condottiere* was in other words a contractor or *impresario*, undertaking to do a certain piece of work for a certain price, and to furnish the requisite forces for the business in good working order. It will be readily seen upon this system how important were the personal qualities of the captain, and what great advantages those *Condottieri* had, who, like the petty princes of Romagna and the March, the Montefeltri, Ordelaffi, Malatesti, Manfredi, Orsini, and Vitelli, could rely upon a race of hardy vassals for their recruits.

It is not necessary to follow Colleoni's fortunes in the Regno, at Aquila, Ancona, and Bologna. He continued in the service of Caldora, who was now General of the Church, and had his *Condotta* gradually increased. Meanwhile his cousins, the murderers of his father, began to dread his rising power, and determined, if possible, to ruin him. He was not a man to be easily assassinated ; so they sent a hired ruffian to Caldora's camp to say that Bartolommeo had taken his name by fraud, and that he was himself the real son of Pùho Colleoni. Bartolommeo defied the liar to a duel ; and this would have taken place before the army, had not two witnesses appeared, who knew the fathers of both Colleoni and the *bravo*, and who gave such evidence that the captains of the army were enabled to ascertain the truth. The impostor was stripped and drummed out of the camp.

At the conclusion of a peace between the Pope and the Bolognese, Bartolommeo found himself without occupation. He now offered himself to the Venetians, and began to fight again under the great Carmagnola against Filippo Visconti. His engagement allowed him forty men, which, after the

judicial murder of Carmagnola at Venice in 1432, were increased to eighty. Erasmo da Narni, better known as Gattamelata, was now his general-in-chief—a man who had risen from the lowest fortunes to one of the most splendid military positions in Italy. Colleoni spent the next years of his life, until 1443, in Lombardy, manœuvring against Il Piccinino, and gradually rising in the Venetian service, until his Condotta reached the number of 800 men. Upon Gattamelata's death at Padua in 1440, Colleoni became the most important of the generals who had fought with Caldora in the March. The lordships of Romano in the Bergamasque and of Covo and Antegnate in the Cremonese had been assigned to him; and he was in a position to make independent engagements with princes. What distinguished him as a general, was a combination of caution with audacity. He united the brilliant system of his master Braccio with the more prudent tactics of the Sforzeschi; and thus, though he often surprised his foes by daring stratagems and vigorous assaults, he rarely met with any serious check. He was a captain who could be relied upon for boldly seizing an advantage, no less than for using a success with discretion. Moreover he had acquired an almost unique reputation for honesty in dealing with his masters, and for justice combined with humane indulgence to his men. His company was popular, and he could always bring capital troops into the field.

In the year 1443, Colleoni quitted the Venetian service on account of a quarrel with Gherardo Dandolo, the Proveditore of the Republic. He now took a commission from Filippo Maria Visconti, who received him at Milan with great honour, bestowed on him the Castello Adorno at Pavia, and sent him into the March of Ancona upon a military expedition. Of all Italian tyrants this Visconti was the most difficult to serve. Constitutionally timid, surrounded with a crowd of spies and base informers, shrinking from the sight of men in the recesses

of his palace, and controlling the complicated affairs of his Duchy by means of correspondents and intelligencers, this last scion of the Milanese despots lived like a spider in an inscrutable network of suspicion and intrigue. His policy was one of endless plot and counterplot. He trusted no man ; his servants were paid to act as spies on one another ; his body-guard consisted of mutually hostile mercenaries ; his captains in the field were watched and thwarted by commissioners appointed to check them at the point of successful ambition or magnificent victory. The historian has a hard task when he tries to fathom the Visconti's schemes, or to understand his motives. Half the Duke's time seems to have been spent in unravelling the webs that he had woven, in undoing his own work, and weakening the hands of his chosen ministers. Conscious that his power was artificial, that the least breath might blow him back into the nothingness from which he had arisen on the wrecks of his father's tyranny, he dreaded the personal eminence of his generals above all things. His chief object was to establish a system of checks, by means of which no one whom he employed should at any moment be great enough to threaten him. The most formidable of these military adventurers, Francesco Sforza, had been secured by marriage with Bianca Maria Visconti, his master's only daughter, in 1441 ; but the Duke did not even trust his son-in-law. The last six years of his life were spent in scheming to deprive Sforza of his lordships ; and the war in the March, on which he employed Colleoni, had the object of ruining the principality acquired by this daring captain from Pope Eugenius IV. in 1443.

Colleoni was by no means deficient in those foxlike qualities which were necessary to save the lion from the toils spread for him by Italian intriguers. He had already shown that he knew how to push his own interests, by changing sides and taking service with the highest bidder, as occasion prompted.

Nor, though his character for probity and loyalty stood exceptionally high among the men of his profession, was he the slave to any questionable claims of honour or of duty. In that age of confused politics and extinguished patriotism, there was not indeed much scope for scrupulous honesty. But Filippo Maria Visconti proved more than a match for him in craft. While Colleoni was engaged in pacifying the revolted population of Bologna, the Duke yielded to the suggestion of his parasites at Milan, who whispered that the general was becoming dangerously powerful. He recalled him, and threw him without trial into the dungeons of the Forni at Monza. Here Colleoni remained a prisoner more than a year, until the Duke's death, in 1447, when he made his escape, and profited by the disturbance of the Duchy to reacquire his lordships in the Bergamasque territory. The true motive for his imprisonment remains still buried in obscure conjecture. Probably it was not even known to the Visconti, who acted on this, as on so many other occasions, by a mere spasm of suspicious jealousy, for which he could have given no account.

From the year 1447 to the year 1455, it is difficult to follow Colleoni's movements, or to trace his policy. First, we find him employed by the Milanese Republic, during its brief space of independence ; then he is engaged by the Venetians, with a commission for 1500 horse ; next, he is in the service of Francesco Sforza ; once more in that of the Venetians, and yet again in that of the Duke of Milan. His biographer relates with pride that, during this period, he was three times successful against French troops in Piedmont and Lombardy. It appears that he made short engagements, and changed his pay-masters according to convenience. But all this time he rose in personal importance, acquired fresh lordships in the Bergamasque, and accumulated wealth. He reached the highest point of his prosperity in 1455, when the Republic of S. Mark elected him General-in-Chief of their armies, with the fullest

powers, and with a stipend of 100,000 florins. For nearly twenty-one years, until the day of his death, in 1475, Colleoni held this honourable and lucrative office. In his will he charged the Signory of Venice that they should never again commit into the hands of a single Captain such unlimited control over their military resources. It was indeed no slight tribute to Colleoni's reputation for integrity, that the jealous Republic, which had signified its sense of Carmagnola's untrustworthiness by capital punishment, should have left him so long in the undisturbed disposal of their army. The Standard and the Baton of S. Mark were conveyed to Colleoni by two ambassadors, and presented to him at Brescia on June 24, 1455. Three years later he made a triumphal entry into Venice, and received the same ensigns of military authority from the hands of the new Doge, Pasquale Malipiero. On this occasion his staff consisted of some two hundred officers, splendidly armed, and followed by a train of serving-men. Noblemen from Bergamo, Brescia, and other cities of the Venetian territory, swelled the cortége. When they embarked on the lagoons, they found the water covered with boats and gondolas, bearing the population of Venice in gala attire, to greet the illustrious guest with instruments of music. Three great galleys of the Republic, called Bucentaurs, issued from the crowd of smaller craft. On the first was the Doge in his state robes, attended by the government in office, or the Signoria of S. Mark. On the second were members of the Senate and minor magistrates. The third carried the ambassadors of foreign powers. Colleoni was received into the first state-galley, and placed by the side of the Doge. The oarsmen soon cleared the space between the land and Venice, passed the small canals, and swept majestically up the Canalazzo among the plaudits of the crowds assembled on both sides to cheer their General. Thus they reached the piazzetta, where Colleoni alighted between the two great pillars, and, conducted by the Doge in person, walked to

the Church of S. Mark. Here, after Mass had been said, and a sermon had been preached, kneeling before the high altar he received the truncheon from the Doge's hands. The words of his commission ran as follows :—

' By authority and decree of this most excellent City of Venice, of us the Prince, and of the Senate, you are to be Commander and Captain General of all our forces and armaments on terra firma. Take from our hands this truncheon, with good augury and fortune, as sign and warrant of your power. Be it your care and effort, with dignity and splendour to maintain and to defend the Majesty, the Loyalty, and the Principles of this Empire. Neither provoking, nor yet provoked, unless at our command, shall you break into open warfare with our enemies. Free jurisdiction and lordship over each one of our soldiers, except in cases of treason, we hereby commit to you.'

After the ceremony of his reception, Colleoni was conducted with no less pomp to his lodgings, and the next ten days were spent in festivities of all sorts.

The commandership-in-chief of the Venetian forces was perhaps the highest military post in Italy. It placed Colleoni on the pinnacle of his profession, and made his camp the favourite school of young soldiers. Among his pupils or lieutenants we read of Ercole d'Este, the future Duke of Ferrara ; Alessandro Sforza, lord of Pesaro ; Boniface, Marquis of Montferrat ; Cicco and Pino Ordelaffi, princes of Forli ; Astorre Manfredi, the lord of Faenza ; three Counts of Mirandola ; two princes of Carpi ; Deifobo, the Count of Anguillara ; Giovanni Antonio Caldora, lord of Jesi in the March ; and many others of less name. Honours came thick upon him. When one of the many ineffectual leagues against the infidel was formed in 1468, during the pontificate of Paul II., he was named Captain-General for the Crusade. Pius II. designed him for the leader of the expedition he had planned against the impious and

savage despot, Sigismondo Malatesta. King René of Anjou, by special patent, authorised him to bear his name and arms, and made him a member of his family. The Duke of Burgundy, by a similar heraldic fiction, conferred upon him his name and armorial bearings. This will explain why Colleoni is often styled ‘di Andegavia e Borgogna.’ In the case of René, the honour was but a barren show. But the patent of Charles the Bold had more significance. In 1473 he entertained the project of employing the great Italian General against his Swiss foes ; nor does it seem reasonable to reject a statement made by Colleoni’s biographer, to the effect that a secret compact had been drawn up between him and the Duke of Burgundy, for the conquest and partition of the Duchy of Milan. The Venetians, in whose service Colleoni still remained, when they became aware of this project, met it with peaceful but irresistible opposition.

Colleoni had been engaged continually since his earliest boyhood in the trade of war. It was not therefore possible that he should have gained a great degree of literary culture. Yet the fashion of the times made it necessary that a man in his position should seek the society of scholars. Accordingly his court and camp were crowded with students, in whose wordy disputationes he is said to have delighted. It will be remembered that his contemporaries, Alfonso the Magnanimous, Francesco Sforza, Federigo of Urbino, and Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta, piqued themselves at least as much upon their patronage of letters, as upon their prowess in the field.

Colleoni’s court, like that of Urbino, was a model of good manners. As became a soldier, he was temperate in food and moderate in slumber. It was recorded of him that he had never sat more than one hour at meat in his own house, and that he never overslept the sunrise. After dinner he would converse with his friends, using commonly his native dialect of Bergamo, and entertaining the company now with

stories of adventure, and now with pithy sayings. In another essential point he resembled his illustrious contemporary, the Duke of Urbino; for he was sincerely pious in an age which, however it preserved the decencies of ceremonial religion, was profoundly corrupt at heart. His principal lordships in the Bergamasque territory owed to his munificence their fairest churches and charitable institutions. At Martinengo, for example, he rebuilt and re-endowed two monasteries, the one dedicated to S. Chiara, the other to S. Francis. In Bergamo itself he founded an establishment named 'La Pietà,' for the good purpose of dowering and marrying poor girls. This house he endowed with a yearly income of 3,000 ducats. The Sulphur baths of Trescorio, at some distance from the city, were improved and opened to poor patients by a hospital which he provided. At Rumano he raised a church to S. Peter, and erected buildings of public utility, which on his death he bequeathed to the society of the Misericordia in that town. All the places of his jurisdiction owed to him such benefits as good water, new walls, and irrigation works. In addition to these munificent foundations must be mentioned the Basella, or Monastery of Dominican friars, which he established not far from Bergamo, upon the river Serio, in memory of his beloved daughter Medea. Last, not least, was the Chapel of S. John the Baptist, attached to the Church of S. Maria Maggiore, which he endowed with fitting maintenance for two priests and deacons.

The one defect acknowledged by his biographer was his partiality for women. Early in life he married Tisbe, of the noble house of the Brescian Martinenghi, who bore him one daughter, Caterina, wedded to Gasparre Martinengo. Two illegitimate daughters, Ursina and Isotta, were recognised and treated by him as legitimate. The first he gave in marriage to Gherardo Martinengo, and the second to Jacopo of the same family. Two other natural children, Doratina and Ricardona,

were mentioned in his will : he left them four thousand ducats a piece for dowry. Medea, the child of his old age (for she was born to him when he was sixty), died before her father, and was buried, as we have seen, in the Chapel of Basella.

Throughout his life he was distinguished for great physical strength and agility. When he first joined the troop of Braccio, he could race, with his corselet on, against the swiftest runner of the army ; and when he was stripped, few horses could beat him in speed. Far on into old age he was in the habit of taking long walks every morning for the sake of exercise, and delighted in feats of arms and jousting matches. ‘ He was tall, straight, and full of flesh, well-proportioned, and excellently made in all his limbs. His complexion inclined somewhat to brown, but was coloured with sanguine and lively carnation. His eyes were black ; in look and sharpness of light, they were vivid, piercing and terrible. The outlines of his nose and all his countenance expressed a certain manly nobleness, combined with goodness and prudence.’ Such is the portrait drawn of Colleoni by his biographer ; and it well accords with the famous bronze statue of the general at Venice.

Colleoni lived with a magnificence that suited his rank. His favourite place of abode was Malpaga, a castle built by him at the distance of about an hour’s drive from Bergamo. The place is worth a visit, though its courts and gates and galleries have now been turned into a monster farm, and the southern rooms, where Colleoni entertained his guests, are given over to the silkworms. Half a dozen families, employed upon a vast estate of the Martinengo family, occupy the still substantial house and stables. The moat is planted with mulberry-trees ; the upper rooms are used as granaries for golden maize ; cows, pigs, and horses litter in the spacious yard. Yet the walls of the inner court and of the ancient state rooms are brilliant with frescoes, executed by some good Venetian hand, which represent the chief events of Colleoni’s life—his battles, his reception by

the Signory of Venice, his tournaments and hawking parties, and the great series of entertainments with which he welcomed Christiern of Denmark. This king had made his pilgrimage to Rome and was returning westward, when the fame of Colleoni and his princely state at Malpaga induced him to turn aside and spend some days as the general's guest. In order to do him honour, Colleoni left his castle at the king's disposal and established himself with all his staff and servants in a camp at some distance from Malpaga. The camp was duly furnished with tents and trenches, stockades, artillery, and all the other furniture of war. On the king's approach, Colleoni issued with trumpets blowing and banners flying to greet his guest, gratifying him thus with a spectacle of the pomp and circumstance of war as carried on in Italy. The visit was further enlivened by sham fights, feats of arms, and trials of strength. When it ended, Colleoni presented the king with one of his own suits of armour, and gave to each of his servants a complete livery of red and white, his colours. Among the frescoes at Malpaga none are more interesting, and none, thanks to the silkworms rather than to any other cause, are fortunately in a better state of preservation, than those which represent this episode in the history of the Castle.

Colleoni died in the year 1475, at the age of seventy-five. Since he left no male representative, he constituted the Republic of S. Mark his heir in chief, after properly providing for his daughters and his numerous foundations. The Venetians received under this testament a sum of 100,000 ducats, together with all arrears of pay due to him, and 10,000 ducats owed him by the Duke of Ferrara. It set forth the testator's intention that this money should be employed in defence of the Christian faith against the Turk. One condition was attached to the bequest. The legatees were to erect a statue to Colleoni on the Piazza of S. Mark. This, however, involved some difficulty ; for the proud Republic had never accorded a similar honour,

nor did they choose to encumber their splendid square with a monument. They evaded the condition by assigning the Campo in front of the Scuola di S. Marco, where also stands the Church of S. Zanipolo, to the purpose. Here accordingly the finest bronze equestrian statue in Italy, if we except the Marcus Aurelius of the Capitol, was reared upon its marble pedestal by Andrea Verocchio and Alessandro Leopardi.

Colleoni's liberal expenditure of wealth found its reward in the immortality conferred by art. While the names of Braccio, his master in the art of war, and of Piccinino, his great adversary, are familiar to few but professed students, no one who has visited either Bergamo or Venice can fail to have learned something about the founder of the Chapel of S. John and the original of Leopardi's bronze. The annals of sculpture assign to Verocchio, of Florence, the principal share in this statue : but Verocchio died before it was cast ; and even granting that he designed the model, its execution must be attributed to his collaborator, the Venetian Leopardi. For my own part, I am loth to admit that the chief credit of this masterpiece belongs to a man whose undisputed work at Florence shows but little of its living spirit and splendour of suggested motion. That the Tuscan science of Verocchio secured conscientious modelling for man and horse may be assumed ; but I am fain to believe that the concentrated fire which animates them both is due in no small measure to the handling of his northern fellow-craftsman.

While immersed in the dreary records of crimes, treasons, cruelties, and base ambitions, which constitute the bulk of fifteenth-century Italian history, it is refreshing to meet with a character so frank and manly, so simply pious and comparatively free from stain, as Colleoni. The only general of his day who can bear comparison with him for purity of public life and decency in conduct, was Federigo di Montefeltro. Even here, the comparison redounds to Colleoni's credit ; for he, unlike

the Duke of Urbino, rose to eminence by his own exertion in a profession fraught with peril to men of ambition and energy. Federigo started with a principality sufficient to satisfy his just desires for power. Nothing but his own sense of right and prudence restrained Colleoni upon the path which brought Francesco Sforza to a duchy by dishonourable dealings, and Carmagnola to the scaffold by questionable practice against his masters.

COMO AND IL MEDEGHINO.

To which of the Italian lakes should the palm of beauty be accorded? This question may not unfrequently have moved the idle minds of travellers, wandering through that loveliest region from Orta to Garda—from little Orta, with her gem-like island, rosy granite crags, and chestnut-covered swards above the Colma ; to Garda, bluest of all waters, surveyed in majestic length from Desenzano or poetic Sirmione, a silvery sleeping haze of hill and cloud and heaven and clear waves bathed in modulated azure. And between these extreme points what varied lovelinesses lie in broad Maggiore, winding Como, Varese with the laughing face upturned to heaven, Lugano overshadowed by the crested crags of Monte Generoso, and Iseo far withdrawn among the rocky Alps! He who loves immense space, cloud shadows slowly sailing over purple slopes, island gardens, distant glimpses of snow-capped mountains, breadth, air, immensity, and flooding sunlight, will choose Maggiore. But scarcely has he cast his vote for this, the Juno of the divine rivals, when he remembers the triple lovelinesses of the Larian Aphrodite, disclosed in all their placid grace from Villa Serbelloni ;—the green blue of the waters, clear as glass, opaque through depth ; the *millefleurs* roses clambering into cypresses by Cadenabbia ; the laburnums hanging their yellow clusters from the clefts of Sasso Rancio ; the oleander arcades of Varenna ; the wild white limestone crags of San Martino, which he has climbed to feast his eyes with the perspective, magical, serene, Lionardesquely perfect,

of the distant gates of Adda. Then while this modern Paris is yet doubting, perhaps a thought may cross his mind of sterner, solitary Lake Iseo—the Pallas of the three. She offers her own attractions. The sublimity of Monte Adamello, dominating Lovere and all the lowland like Hesiod's hill of Virtue reared aloft above the plain of common life, has charms to tempt heroic lovers. Nor can Varese be neglected. In some picturesque respects, Varese is the most perfect of the lakes. Those long lines of swelling hills that lead into the level, yield an infinite series of placid foregrounds, pleasant to the eye by contrast with the dominant snow-summits, from Monte Viso to Monte Leone : the sky is limitless to southward ; the low horizons are broken by bell-towers and farm-houses ; while armaments of clouds are ever rolling in the interval of Alps and plain.

Of a truth, to decide which is the queen of the Italian lakes, is but an *infinita questio* ; and the mere raising of it is folly. Still each lover of the beautiful may give his vote ; and mine, like that of shepherd Paris, is already given to the Larian goddess. Words fail in attempting to set forth charms which have to be enjoyed, or can at best but lightly be touched with most consummate tact, even as great poets have already touched on Como Lake—from Virgil with his ‘*Lari maxume*,’ to Tennyson and the Italian Manzoni. The threshold of the shrine is, however, less consecrated ground ; and the Cathedral of Como may form a vestibule to the temple where silence is more golden than the speech of a describer.

The Cathedral of Como is perhaps the most perfect building in Italy for illustrating the fusion of Gothic and Renaissance styles, both of a good type and exquisite in their sobriety. The Gothic ends with the nave. The noble transepts and the choir, each terminating in a rounded tribune of the same dimensions, are carried out in a simple and decorous Bramantesque manner. The transition from the one style to the other is managed so

felicitously, and the sympathies between them are so well developed, that there is no discord. What we here call Gothic, is conceived in a truly southern spirit, without fantastic efflorescence or imaginative complexity of multiplied parts ; while the Renaissance manner, as applied by Tommaso Rodari, has not yet stiffened into the lifeless neo-Latinism of the later Cinque Cento : it is still distinguished by delicate inventiveness, and beautiful subordination of decorative detail to architectural effect. Under these happy conditions we feel that the Gothic of the nave, with its superior severity and sombreness, dilates into the lucid harmonies of choir and transepts like a flower unfolding. In the one the mind is tuned to inner meditation and religious awe ; in the other the worshipper passes into a temple of the clear explicit faith—as an initiated neophyte might be received into the meaning of the mysteries.

After the collapse of the Roman Empire the district of Como seems to have maintained more vividly than the rest of Northern Italy some memory of classic art. *Magistri Comacini* is a title frequently inscribed upon deeds and charters of the earlier middle ages, as synonymous with sculptors and architects. This fact may help to account for the purity and beauty of the Duomo. It is the work of a race in which the tradition of delicate artistic invention had never been wholly interrupted. To Tommaso Rodari and his brothers, Bernardino and Jacopo, the world owes this sympathetic fusion of the Gothic and the Bramantesque styles ; and theirs too is the sculpture with which the Duomo is so richly decorated. They were natives of Maroggia, a village near Mendrisio, beneath the crests of Monte Generoso, close to Campione, which sent so many able craftsmen out into the world between the years 1300 and 1500. Indeed the name of Campionesi would probably have been given to the Rodari, had they left their native province for service in Eastern Lombardy. The body of the Duomo had been finished when

Tommaso Rodari was appointed master of the fabric in 1487. To complete the work by the addition of a tribune was his duty. He prepared a wooden model and exposed it, after the fashion of those times, for criticism in his *bottega*; and the usual difference of opinion arose among the citizens of Como concerning its merits. Cristoforo Solaro, surnamed Il Gobbo, was called in to advise. It may be remembered that when Michelangelo first placed his Pietà in S. Péter's, rumour gave it to this celebrated Lombard sculptor, and the Florentine was constrained to set his own signature upon the marble. The same Solaro carved the monument of Beatrice Sforza in the Certosa of Pavia. He was indeed in all points competent to criticise or to confirm the design of his fellow-craftsman. Il Gobbo disapproved of the proportions chosen by Rodari, and ordered a new model to be made; but after much discussion, and some concessions on the part of Rodari, who is said to have increased the number of the windows and lightened the orders of his model, the work was finally entrusted to the master of Maroggia.

Not less creditable than the general design of the tribune is the sculpture executed by the brothers. The north side door is a master-work of early Renaissance chiselling, combining mixed Christian and classical motives with a wealth of floral ornament. Inside, over the same door, is a procession of children seeming to represent the Triumph of Bacchus, with perhaps some Christian symbolism. Opposite, above the south door, is a frieze of fighting Tritons—horsed sea deities pounding one another with bunches of fish and splashing the water, in Mantegna's spirit. The doorways of the façade are decorated with the same rare workmanship; and the canopies, supported by naked fauns and slender twisted figures, under which the two Plinies are seated, may be reckoned among the supreme achievements of delicate Renaissance sculpture. The Plinies are not like the work of the same master. They

are older, stiffer, and more Gothic. The chief interest attaching to them is that they are habited and seated after the fashion of Humanists. This consecration of the two Pagan saints beside the portals of the Christian temple is truly characteristic of the fifteenth century in Italy. Beneath, are little basreliefs representing scenes from their respective lives, in the style of carved predellas on the altars of saints.

The whole church is peopled with detached statues, among which a Sebastian in the Chapel of the Madonna must be mentioned as singularly beautiful. It is a finely modelled figure, with the full life and exuberant adolescence of Venetian inspiration. A peculiar feature of the external architecture is the series of Atlantes, bearing on their shoulders urns, heads of lions, and other devices, and standing on brackets round the upper cornice just below the roof. They are of all sorts : young and old, male and female ; classically nude, and boldly outlined. These water-conduits, the work of Bernardo Bianco and Francesco Rusca, illustrate the departure of the earlier Renaissance from the Gothic style. They are gargoyles ; but they have lost the grotesque element. At the same time the sculptor, while discarding Gothic tradition, has not betaken himself yet to a servile imitation of the antique. He has used invention, and substituted for grinning dragons' heads something wild and bizarre of his own in harmony with classic taste.

The pictures in the chapels, chiefly by Luini and Ferrari—an idyllic Nativity, with faun-like shepherds and choirs of angels—a sumptuous adoration of the Magi—a jewelled Sposalizio with abundance of golden hair flowing over draperies of green and crimson—will interest those who are as yet unfamiliar with Lombard painting. Yet their architectural setting, perhaps, is superior to their intrinsic merit as works of art ; and their chief value consists in adding rare dim flakes of colour to the cool light of the lovely church. More curious, because less easily matched, is the gilded woodwork above the altar of S. Abondio,

attributed to a German carver, but executed for the most part in the purest Luinesque manner. The pose of the enthroned Madonna, the type and gesture of S. Catherine, and the treatment of the Pietà above, are thoroughly Lombard, showing how Luini's ideal of beauty could be expressed in carving. Some of the choicest figures in the Monastero Maggiore at Milan seem to have descended from the walls and stepped into their tabernacles on this altar. Yet the style is not maintained consistently. In the reliefs illustrating the life of S. Abondio we miss Luini's childlike grace, and find instead a something that reminds us of Donatello—a seeking after the classical in dress, carriage, and grouping of accessory figures. It may have been that the carver, recognising Luini's defective composition, and finding nothing in that master's manner adapted to the spirit of relief, had the good taste to render what was Luinesquely lovely in his female figures, and to fall back on a severer model for his bas-reliefs.

The building-fund for the Duomo was raised in Como and its districts. Boxes were placed in all the churches to receive the alms of those who wished to aid the work. The clergy begged in Lent, and preached the duty of contributing on special days. Presents of lime and bricks and other materials were thankfully received. Bishops, canons, and municipal magistrates were expected to make costly gifts on taking office. Notaries, under penalty of paying 100 soldi if they neglected their engagement, were obliged to persuade testators, *cum bonis modis dulciter*, to inscribe the Duomo on their wills. Fines for various offences were voted to the building by the city. Each new burgher paid a certain sum; while guilds and farmers of the taxes bought monopolies and privileges at the price of yearly subsidies. A lottery was finally established for the benefit of the fabric. Of course each payment to the good work carried with it spiritual privileges; and so willingly did the people respond to the call of the Church, that during the sixteenth

century the sums subscribed amounted to 200,000 golden crowns. Among the most munificent donators are mentioned the Marchese Giacomo Gallio, who bequeathed 290,000 lire, and a Benzi, who gave 10,000 ducats.

While the people of Como were thus straining every nerve to complete a pious work, which at the same time is one of the most perfect masterpieces of Italian art, their lovely lake was turned into a pirate's stronghold, and its green waves stained with slaughter of conflicting navies. So curious is this episode in the history of the Larian lake that it is worth while to treat of it at some length. Moreover, the lives of few captains of adventure offer matter more rich in picturesque details and more illustrative of their times than that of Gian Giacomo de' Medici, the Larian corsair, long known and still remembered as Il Medeghino. He was born in Milan in 1498, at the beginning of that darkest and most disastrous period of Italian history, when the old fabric of social and political existence went to ruin under the impact of conflicting foreign armies. He lived on until the year 1555, witnessing and taking part in the dismemberment of the Milanese Duchy, playing a game of hazard at high stakes for his own profit with the two last Sforzas, the Empire, the French, and the Swiss. At the beginning of the century, while he was still a youth, the rich valley of the Valtelline, with Bormio and Chiavenna, had been assigned to the Grisons. The Swiss Cantons at the same time had possessed themselves of Lugano and Bellinzona. By these two acts of robbery the mountaineers tore a portion of its fairest territory from the Duchy ; and whoever ruled in Milan, whether a Sforza, or a Spanish viceroy, or a French general, was impatient to recover the lost jewel of the ducal crown. So much has to be premised, because the scene of our hero's romantic adventures was laid upon the borderland between the Duchy and the Cantons. Intriguing at one time with the Duke of Milan, at another with his foes the French or Spaniards, Il Medeghino

found free scope for his peculiar genius in a guerilla warfare, carried on with the avowed purpose of restoring the Valtelline to Milan. To steer a plain course through that chaos of politics, in which the modern student, aided by the calm clear lights of history and meditation, cannot find a clue, was of course impossible for an adventurer whose one aim was to gratify his passions and exalt himself at the expense of others. It is therefore of little use to seek motives of statecraft or of patriotism in the conduct of Il Medeghino. He was a man shaped according to Machiavelli's standard of political morality—self-reliant, using craft and force with cold indifference to moral ends, bent only upon wringing for himself the largest share of this world's power from men who, like himself, identified virtue with unflinching and immitigable egotism.

Il Medeghino's father was Bernardo de' Medici, a Lombard, who neither claimed nor could have proved cousinship with the great Medicean family of Florence. His mother was Cecilia Serbelloni. The boy was educated in the fashionable humanistic studies, nourishing his young imagination with the tales of Roman heroes. The first exploit by which he proved his *virtù*, was the murder of a man he hated, at the age of sixteen. This 'virile act of vengeance,' as it was called, brought him into trouble, and forced him to choose the congenial profession of arms. At a time when violence and vigour passed for manliness, a spirited assassination formed the best of introductions to the captains of mixed mercenary troops. Il Medeghino rose in favour with his generals, helped to reinstate Francesco Sforza in his capital, and, returning himself to Milan, inflicted severe vengeance on the enemies who had driven him to exile. It was his ambition, at this early period of his life, to be made governor of the Castle of Musso, on the Lake of Como. While fighting in the neighbourhood, he had observed the unrivalled capacities for defence presented by its site ; and some prevision of his future destinies now urged him to acquire it, as the basis

for the free marauding life he planned. The headland of Musso lies about half way between Gravedona and Menaggio, on the right shore of the Lake of Como. Planted on a pedestal of rock, and surmounted by a sheer cliff, there then stood a very ancient tower, commanding this promontory on the side of the land. Between it and the water the Visconti, in more recent days, had built a square fort ; and the headland had been further strengthened by the addition of connecting walls and bastions pierced for cannon. Combining precipitous cliffs, strong towers, and easy access from the lake below, this fortress of Musso was exactly the fit station for a pirate. So long as he kept the command of the lake, he had little to fear from land attacks, and had a splendid basis for aggressive operations. Il Medeghino made his request to the Duke of Milan ; but the foxlike Sforza would not grant him a plain answer. At length he hinted that if his suitor chose to rid him of a troublesome subject, the noble and popular Astore Visconti, he should receive Musso for payment. Crimes of bloodshed and treason sat lightly on the adventurer's conscience. In a short time he compassed the young Visconti's death, and claimed his reward. The Duke despatched him thereupon to Musso, with open letters to the governor, commanding him to yield the castle to the bearer. Private advice, also entrusted to Il Medeghino, bade the governor, on the contrary, cut the bearer's throat. The young man, who had the sense to read the Duke's letter, destroyed the secret document, and presented the other, or, as one version of the story goes, forged a ducal order in his own favour.¹ At any rate, the castle was placed in his hands ; and affecting to know nothing of the Duke's intended treachery, Il Medeghino took possession of it as a trusted servant of the ducal crown.

¹ I cannot see clearly through these transactions, the muddy waters of decadent Italian plot and counterplot being inscrutable to senses assisted by nothing more luminous than mere tradition.

As soon as he was settled in his castle, the freebooter devoted all his energies to rendering it still more impregnable by strengthening the walls and breaking the cliffs into more horrid precipices. In this work he was assisted by his numerous friends and followers ; for Musso rapidly became, like ancient Rome, an asylum for the ruffians and outlaws of neighbouring provinces. It is even said that his sisters, Clarina and Margherita, rendered efficient aid with manual labour. The mention of Clarina's name justifies a parenthetical side-glance at Il Medeghino's pedigree, which will serve to illustrate the exceptional conditions of Italian society during this age. She was married to the Count Giberto Borromeo, and became the mother of the pious Carlo Borromeo, whose shrine is still adored at Milan in the Duomo. Il Medeghino's brother, Giovan Angelo, rose to the Papacy, assuming the title of Pius IV. Thus this murderous marauder was the brother of a Pope and the uncle of a Saint ; and these three persons of one family embraced the various degrees and typified the several characters which flourished with peculiar lustre in Renaissance Italy—the captain of adventure soaked in blood, the churchman unrivalled for intrigue, and the saint aflame with holiest enthusiasm. Il Medeghino was short of stature, but well made and powerful ; broad-chested ; with a penetrating voice and winning countenance. He dressed simply, like one of his own soldiers ; slept but little ; was insensible to carnal pleasure ; and though he knew how to win the affection of his men by jovial speech, he maintained strict discipline in his little army. In all points he was an ideal bandit chief, never happy unless fighting or planning campaigns, inflexible of purpose, bold and cunning in the execution of his schemes, cruel to his enemies, generous to his followers, sacrificing all considerations, human and divine, to the one aim of his life, self-aggrandisement by force and intrigue. He knew well how to make himself both feared and respected. One instance of his dealing will suffice. A gentle-

man of Bellano, Polidoro Boldoni, in return to his advances, coldly replied that he cared for neither amity nor relationship with thieves and robbers ; whereupon Il Medeghino extirpated his family, almost to a man.

Soon after his settlement in Musso, Il Medeghino, wishing to secure the gratitude of the Duke, his master, began war with the Grisons. From Coire, from the Engadine, and from Davos, the Alpine pikemen were now pouring down to swell the troops of Francis I. ; and their road lay through the Lake of Como. Il Medeghino burned all the boats upon the lake, except those which he took into his own service, and thus made himself master of the water passage. He then swept the ‘length of lordly Lario’ from Colico to Lecco, harrying the villages upon the shore, and cutting off the bands of journeying Switzers at his pleasure. Not content with this guerilla, he made a descent upon the territory of the Trepievi, and pushed far up towards Chiavenna, forcing the Grisons to recall their troops from the Milanese. These acts of prowess convinced the Duke that he had found a strong ally in the pirate chief. When Francis I. continued his attacks upon the Duchy, and the Grisons still adhered to their French paymaster, the Sforza formally invested Gian Giacomo de’ Medici with the perpetual governorship of Musso, the Lake of Como, and as much as he could wrest from the Grisons above the lake. Furnished now with a just title for his depredations, Il Medeghino undertook the siege of Chiavenna. That town is the key to the valleys of the Splügen and Bregaglia. Strongly fortified and well situated for defence, the burghers of the Grisons well knew that upon its possession depended their power in the Italian valleys. To take it by assault was impossible. Il Medeghino used craft, entered the castle, and soon had the city at his disposition. Nor did he lose time in sweeping Val Bregaglia. The news of this conquest recalled the Switzers from the Duchy ; and as they hurried homeward just before the battle of Pavia, it may be affirmed

that Gian Giacomo de' Medici was instrumental in the defeat and capture of the French King. The mountaineers had no great difficulty in dislodging their pirate enemy from Chiavenna, the Valtelline, and Val Bregaglia. But he retained his hold on the Trepievi, occupied the Valsassina, took Porlezza, and established himself still more strongly in Musso as the corsair monarch of the lake.

The tyranny of the Sforzas in Milan was fast going to pieces between France and Spain ; and in 1526 the Marquis of Pescara occupied the capital in the name of Charles V. The Duke, meanwhile, remained a prisoner in his Castello. Il Medeghino was now without a master ; for he refused to acknowledge the Spaniards, preferring to watch events and build his own power on the ruins of the dukedom. At the head of 4,000 men, recruited from the lakes and neighbouring valleys, he swept the country far and wide, and occupied the rich champaign of the Brianza. He was now lord of the lakes of Como and Lugano, and absolute in Lecco and the adjoining valleys. The town of Como itself alone belonged to the Spaniards ; and even Como was blockaded by the navy of the corsair. Il Medeghino had a force of seven big ships, with three sails and forty-eight oars, bristling with guns and carrying marines. His flagship was a large brigantine, manned by picked rowers, from the mast of which floated the red banner with the golden *palle* of the Medicean arms. Besides these larger vessels, he commanded a flotilla of countless small boats. It is clear that to reckon with him was a necessity. If he could not be put down with force, he might be bought over by concessions. The Spaniards adopted the second course, and Il Medeghino, judging that the cause of the Sforza family was desperate, determined in 1528 to attach himself to the Empire. Charles V. invested him with the Castle of Musso and the larger part of Como Lake, including the town of Lecco. He now assumed the titles of Marquis of Musso and Count of Lecco : and in

order to prove his sovereignty before the world, he coined money with his own name and devices.

It will be observed that Gian Giacomo de' Medici had hitherto acted with a single-hearted view to his own interests. At the age of thirty he had raised himself from nothing to a principality, which, though petty, might compare with many of some name in Italy—with Carpi, for example, or Mirandola, or Camerino. Nor did he mean to remain quiet in the prime of life. He regarded Como Lake as the mere basis for more arduous undertakings. Therefore, when the whirligig of events restored Francesco Sforza to his duchy in 1529, Il Medeghino refused to obey his old lord. Pretending to move under the Duke's orders, but really acting for himself alone, he proceeded to attack his ancient enemies, the Grisons. By fraud and force he worked his way into their territory, seized Morbegno, and overran the Valtelline. He was destined, however, to receive a serious check. Twelve thousand Switzers rose against him on the one hand, on the other the Duke of Milan sent a force by land and water to subdue his rebel subject, while Alessandro Gonzaga marched upon his castles in the Brianza. He was thus assailed by formidable forces from three quarters, converging upon the Lake of Como, and driving him to his chosen element, the water. Hastily quitting the Valtelline, he fell back to the Castle of Mandello on the lake, collected his navy, and engaged the ducal ships in a battle off Menaggio. In this battle he was worsted. But he did not lose his courage. From Bellagio, from Varenna, from Bellano he drove forth his enemies, rolled the cannon of the Switzers into the lake, regained Lecco, defeated the troops of Alessandro Gonzaga, and took the Duke of Mantua prisoner. Had he but held Como, it is probable that he might have obtained such terms at this time as would have consolidated his tyranny. The town of Como, however, now belonged to the Duke of Milan, and formed an excellent basis for operations against the

pirate. Overmatched, with an exhausted treasury and broken forces, Il Medeghino was at last compelled to give in. Yet he retired with all the honours of war. In exchange for Musso and the lake, the Duke agreed to give him 35,000 golden crowns, together with the feud and marquisate of Marignano. A free pardon was promised not only to himself and his brothers, but to all his followers ; and the Duke further undertook to transport his artillery and munitions of war at his own expense to Marignano. Having concluded this treaty under the auspices of Charles V. and his lieutenant, Il Medeghino, in March 1532, set sail from Musso, and turned his back upon the lake for ever. The Switzers immediately destroyed the towers, forts, walls, and bastions of the Musso promontory, leaving in the midst of their ruins the little chapel of S. Eufemia.

Gian Giacomo de' Medici, henceforth known to Europe as the Marquis of Marignano, now took service under Spain ; and through the favour of Anton de Leyva, Viceroy for the Duchy, rose to the rank of Field Marshal. When the Marquis del Vasto succeeded to the Spanish governorship of Milan in 1536, he determined to gratify an old grudge against the ex-pirate, and, having invited him to a banquet, made him prisoner. Il Medeghino was not, however, destined to languish in a dungeon. Princes and kings interested themselves in his fate. He was released, and journeyed to the court of Charles V. in Spain. The Emperor received him kindly, and employed him first in the Low Countries, where he helped to repress the burghers of Ghent, and at the siege of Landrecy commanded the Spanish artillery against other Italian captains of adventure ; for, Italy being now dismembered and enslaved, her sons sought foreign service where they found best pay and widest scope for martial science. Afterwards the Medici ruled Bohemia as Spanish Viceroy ; and then, as general of the league formed by the Duke of Florence, the Emperor, and the Pope to repress

the liberties of Tuscany, distinguished himself in that cruel war of extermination, which turned the fair Contado of Siena into a poisonous Maremma. To the last Il Medeghino preserved the instincts and the passions of a brigand chief. It was at this time that, acting for the Grand Duke of Tuscany, he first claimed open kinship with the Medici of Florence. Heralds and genealogists produced a pedigree, which seemed to authorise this pretension ; he was recognised, together with his brother, Pius IV., as an offshoot of the great house which had already given Dukes to Florence, Kings to France, and two Popes to the Christian world. In the midst of all this foreign service he never forgot his old dream of conquering the Valtelline ; and in 1547 he made proposals to the Emperor for a new campaign against the Grisons. Charles V. did not choose to engage in a war, the profits of which would have been inconsiderable for the master of half the civilised world, and which might have proved troublesome by stirring up the tameless Switzers. Il Medeghino was obliged to abandon a project cherished from the earliest dawn of his adventurous manhood.

When Gian Giacomo died in 1555, his brother Battista succeeded to his claims upon Lecco and the Trepievi. His monument, magnificent with five bronze figures, the masterpiece of Leone Lioni, from Menaggio, Michelangelesque in style, and of consummate workmanship, still adorns the Duomo of Milan. It stands close by the door that leads to the roof. This mausoleum, erected to the memory of Gian Giacomo and his brother Gabrio, is said to have cost 7,800 golden crowns. On the occasion of the pirate's funeral the Senate of Milan put on mourning, and the whole city followed the great robber, the hero of Renaissance *virtù*, to the grave.

Between the Cathedral of Como and the corsair Medeghino there is but a slight link. Yet so extraordinary were the social circumstances of Renaissance Italy, that almost at every turn, on her sea-board, in her cities, from her hill-tops, we are com-

peled to blend our admiration for the loveliest and purest works of art amid the choicest scenes of nature with memories of execrable crimes and lawless characters. Sometimes, as at Perugia, the *nexus* is but local. At others, one single figure, like that of Cellini, unites both points of view in a romance of unparalleled dramatic vividness. Or, again, beneath the vaults of the Certosa, near Pavia, a masterpiece of the serenest beauty carries our thoughts perforce back to the hideous cruelties and snake-like frauds of its despotic founder. This is the excuse for combining two such diverse subjects in one study.

LOMBARD VIGNETTES.

ON THE SUPERGA.

THIS is the chord of Lombard colouring in May. Lowest in the scale : bright green of varied tints, the meadow-grasses mingling with willows and acacias, harmonised by air and distance. Next, opaque blue—the blue of something between amethyst and lapis-lazuli—that belongs alone to the basements of Italian mountains. Higher, the roseate whiteness of ridged snow on Alps or Apennines. Highest, the blue of the sky, ascending from pale turquoise to transparent sapphire filled with light. A mediæval mystic might have likened this chord to the spiritual world. For the lowest region is that of natural life, of plant and bird and beast, and unregenerate man ; it is the place of faun and nymph and satyr, the plain where wars are fought and cities built, and work is done. Thence we climb to purified humanity, the mountains of purgation, the solitude and simplicity of contemplative life not yet made perfect by freedom from the flesh. Higher comes that thin white belt, where are the resting places of angelic feet, the points whence purged souls take their flight toward infinity. Above all is heaven, the hierarchies ascending row on row to reach the light of God.

This fancy occurred to me as I climbed the slope of the Superga, gazing over acacia hedges and poplars to the mountains bare in morning light. The occasional occurrence of bars across this chord—poplars shivering in sun and breeze, stationary cypresses as black as night, and tall campanili with

the hot red shafts of glowing brick—adds just enough of composition to the landscape. Without too much straining of the allegory, the mystic might have recognised in these aspiring bars the upward effort of souls rooted in the common life of earth.

The panorama, unrolling as we ascend, is enough to overpower a lover of beauty. There is nothing equal to it for space and breadth and majesty. Monte Rosa, the masses of Mont Blanc blent with the Grand Paradis, the airy pyramid of Monte Viso, these are the battlements of that vast Alpine rampart, in which the vale of Susa opens like a gate. To west and south sweep the Maritime Alps and the Apennines. Beneath, glides the infant Po ; and where he leads our eyes, the plain is only limited by pearly mist.

A BRONZE BUST OF CALIGULA AT TURIN.

The Albertina bronze is one of the most precious portraits of antiquity, not merely because it confirms the testimony of the green basalt bust in the Capitol, but also because it supplies an even more emphatic and impressive illustration to the narrative of Suetonius.

Caligula is here represented as young and singularly beautiful. It is indeed an ideal Roman head, with the powerful square modelling, the crisp short hair, low forehead and regular firm features, proper to the noblest Roman type. The head is thrown backward from the throat ; and there is a something of menace or defiance or suffering in the suggestion of brusque movement given to the sinews of the neck. This attitude, together with the tension of the forehead, and the fixed expression of pain and strain communicated by the lines of the mouth—strong muscles of the upper lip and abruptly chiselled under lip—in relation to the small eyes, deep set beneath their cavernous and level brows, renders the whole face a monument

of spiritual anguish. I remember that the green basalt bust of the Capitol has the same anxious forehead, the same troubled and overburdened eyes ; but the agony of this fretful mouth, comparable to nothing but the mouth of Pandolfo Sigismondo Malatesta, and, like that, on the verge of breaking into the spasms of delirium, is quite peculiar to the Albertina bronze. It is just this which the portrait of the Capitol lacks for the completion of Caligula. The man who could be so represented in art had nothing wholly vulgar in him. The brutality of Caracalla, the overblown sensuality of Nero, the effeminacy of Commodus or Heliogabalus, are all absent here. This face idealises the torture of a morbid soul. It is withal so truly beautiful that it might easily be made the poem of high suffering or noble passion. If the bronze were plastic, I see how a great sculptor, by but few strokes, could convert it into an agonising Stephen or Sebastian. As it is, the unimaginable touch of disease, the unrest of madness, made Caligula the genius of insatiable appetite ; and his martyrdom was the torment of lust and ennui and everlasting agitation. The accident of empire tantalised him with vain hopes of satisfying the Charybdis of his soul's sick cravings. From point to point he passed of empty pleasure and unsatisfying cruelty, for ever hungry ; until the malady of his spirit, unrestrained by any limitations, and with the right medium for its development, became unique—the tragic type of pathological desire. What more than all things must have plagued a man with that face was probably the unavoidable meanness of his career. When we study the chapters of Suetonius, we are forced to feel that, though the situation and the madness of Caligula were dramatically impressive, his crimes were trivial and small. In spite of the vast scale on which he worked his devilish will, his life presents a total picture of sordid vice, differing only from pot-house dissipation and schoolboy cruelty in point of size. And this of a truth is the Nemesis of evil. After a time, mere

tyrannous caprice must become commonplace and cloying, tedious to the tyrant, and uninteresting to the student of humanity : nor can I believe that Caligula failed to perceive this to his own infinite disgust.

Suetonius asserts that he was hideously ugly. How are we to square this testimony with the witness of the bronze before us? What changed the face, so beautiful and terrible in youth, to ugliness that shrank from sight in manhood? Did the murderers find it blurred in its fine lineaments, furrowed with lines of care, hollowed with the soul's hunger? Unless a life of vice and madness had succeeded in making Caligula's face what the faces of some maniacs are—the bloated ruin of what was once a living witness to the soul within—I could fancy that death may have sanctified it with even more beauty than this bust of the self-tormented young man shows. Have we not all seen the anguish of thought-fretted faces smoothed out by the hands of the Deliverer?

FERRARI AT VERCELLI.

It is possible that many visitors to the Cathedral of Como have carried away the memory of stately women with abundant yellow hair and draperies of green and crimson, in a picture they connect thereafter with Gaudenzio Ferrari. And when they come to Milan, they are probably both impressed and disappointed by a Martyrdom of S. Catherine in the Brera, bearing the same artist's name. If they wish to understand this painter, they must seek him at Varallo, at Saronno, and at Vercelli. In the Church of S. Cristoforo in Vercelli, Gaudenzio Ferrari at the full height of his powers showed what he could do to justify Lomazzo's title chosen for him of the Eagle. He has indeed the strong wing and the swiftness of the king of birds. And yet the works of few really great painters—and among the really great we place Ferrari—leave upon the mind

a more distressing sense of imperfection. Extraordinary fertility of fancy, vehement dramatic passion, sincere study of nature, and great command of technical resources are here (as elsewhere in Ferrari's frescoes) neutralised by an incurable defect of the combining and harmonising faculty, so essential to a masterpiece. There is stuff enough of thought and vigour and imagination to make a dozen artists. And yet we turn away disappointed from the crowded, dazzling, stupefying wilderness of forms and faces on these mighty walls.

All that Ferrari derived from actual life—the heads of single figures, the powerful movement of men and women in excited action, the monumental pose of two praying nuns—is admirably rendered. His angels too, in S. Cristoforo as elsewhere, are quite original ; not only in their type of beauty, which is terrestrial and peculiar to Ferrari, without a touch of Correggio's sensuality ; but also in the intensity of their emotion, the realisation of their vitality. Those which hover round the Cross in the fresco of the 'Crucifixion' are as passionate as any angels of the Giottesque masters in Assisi. Those again which crowd the Stable of Bethlehem in the 'Nativity' yield no point of idyllic charm to Gozzoli's in the Riccardi Chapel.

The 'Crucifixion' and the 'Assumption of Madonna' are very tall and narrow compositions, audacious in their attempt to fill almost unmanageable space with a connected action. Of the two frescoes the 'Crucifixion,' which has points of strong similarity to the same subject at Varallo, is by far the best. Ferrari never painted anything at once truer to life and nobler in tragic style than the fainting Virgin. Her face expresses the very acme of martyrdom—not exaggerated nor spasmodic, but real and sublime—in the suffering of a stately matron. In points like this Ferrari cannot be surpassed. Raphael could scarcely have done better ; besides, there is an air of sincerity, a stamp of popular truth, in this episode, which

lies beyond Raphael's sphere. It reminds us rather of Tintoretto.

After the 'Crucifixion,' I place the 'Adoration of the Magi,' full of fine mundane motives and gorgeous costumes ; then the 'Sposalizio' (whose marriage, I am not certain), the only grandly composed picture of the series, and marked by noble heads ; then the 'Adoration of the Shepherds,' with two lovely angels holding the bambino. The 'Assumption of the Magdalen'—for which fresco there is a valuable cartoon in the Albertina Collection at Turin—must have been a fine picture ; but it is ruined now. An oil altar-piece in the choir of the same church struck me less than the frescoes. It represents Madonna and a crowd of saints under an orchard of apple-trees, with cherubs curiously flung about almost at random in the air. The motive of the orchard is prettily conceived and carried out with spirit.

What Ferrari possessed was rapidity of movement, fulness and richness of reality, exuberance of invention, excellent portraiture, dramatic vehemence, and an almost unrivalled sympathy with the swift and passionate world of angels. What he lacked was power of composition, simplicity of total effect, harmony in colouring, control over his own luxuriance, the sense of tranquillity. He seems to have sought grandeur in size and multitude, richness, éclat, contrast. Being the disciple of Lionardo and Raphael, his defects are truly singular. As a composer, the old leaven of Giovenone remained in him ; but he felt the dramatic tendencies of a later age, and in occasional episodes he realised them with a force and *furia* granted to very few of the Italian painters.

LANINI AT VERCELLI.

The Casa Mariano is a palace which belonged to a family of that name. Like many houses of the sort in Italy, it fell to

vile uses ; and its hall of audience was turned into a lumber-room. The Operai of Vercelli, I was told, bought the palace a few years ago, restored the noble hall, and devoted a smaller room to a collection of pictures valuable for students of the early Vercellese style of painting. Of these there is no need to speak. The great hall is the gem of the Casa Mariano. It has a coved roof, with a large flat oblong space in the centre of the ceiling. The whole of this vault and the lunettes beneath were painted by Lanini ; so runs the tradition of the fresco-painter's name ; and though much injured by centuries of outrage, and somewhat marred by recent restoration, these frescoes form a precious monument of Lombard art. The object of the painter's design seems to have been the glorification of Music. In the central compartment of the roof is an assembly of the gods, obviously borrowed from Raphael's ' Marriage of Cupid and Psyche ' in the Farnesina at Rome. The fusion of Roman composition with Lombard execution constitutes the chief charm of this singular work, and makes it, so far as I am aware, unique. Single figures of the goddesses, and the whole movement of the scene upon Olympus, are transcribed without attempt at concealment. And yet the fresco is not a barefaced copy. The manner of feeling and of execution is quite different from that of Raphael's school. The poetry and sentiment are genuinely Lombard. None of Raphael's pupils could have carried out his design with a delicacy of emotion and a technical skill in colouring so consummate. What, we think, as we gaze upward, would the Master have given for such a craftsman ? The hardness, coarseness, and animal crudity of the Roman School are absent : so also is their vigour. But where the grace of form and colour is so soft and sweet, where the high-bred calm of good company is so sympathetically rendered, where the atmosphere of amorous languor and of melody is so artistically diffused, we cannot miss the powerful modelling and rather vulgar *tours de force* of Giulio Romano.

The scale of tone is silvery golden. There are no hard blues, no coarse red flesh-tints, no black shadows. Mellow lights, the morning hues of primrose, or of palest amber, pervade the whole society. It is a court of gentle and harmonious souls ; and though this style of beauty might cloy, at first sight there is something ravishing in those yellow-haired, white-limbed, blooming deities. No movement of lascivious grace as in Correggio, no perturbation of the senses as in some of the Venetians, disturbs the rhythm of their music ; nor is the pleasure of the flesh, though felt by the painter and communicated to the spectator, an interruption to their divine calm. The white, saffron-haired goddesses are grouped together like stars seen in the topaz light of evening, like daffodils half smothered in snow-drops, and among them, Diana, with the crescent on her forehead, is the fairest. Her dream-like beauty need fear no comparison with the Diana of the Camera di S. Paolo. Apollo and Bacchus are scarcely less lovely in their bloom of earliest manhood ; honey-pale, as Greeks would say ; like statues of living electron ; realising Simaetha's picture of her lover and his friend :—

*τοῖς δὲ ἦν ξανθοτέρα μὲν ἐλιχρύσου γενείας,
στήθεα δὲ στίλβοντα πολὺ πλέον ἢ τὸ Σελάνα.¹*

It was thus that the almost childlike spirit of the Milanese painters felt the antique : how differently from their Roman brethren ! It was thus that they interpreted the lines of their own poets :—

E i tuoi capei più volte ho somigliati
Di Cerere a le paglie secche o bionde
Dintorno crespi al tuo capo legati.²

¹ ‘The down upon their cheeks and chin was yellower than helichrysus, and their breasts gleamed whiter far than thou, O Moon.’

² ‘Thy tresses have I oftentimes compared to Ceres’ yellow autumn sheaves, wreathed in curled bands around thy head.’

Yet the painter of this hall—whether we are to call him Lanini or another—was not a composer. Where he has not robbed the motives and the distribution of the figures from Raphael, he has nothing left but grace of detail. The intellectual feebleness of his style may be seen in many figures of women playing upon instruments of music, ranged around the walls. One girl at the organ is graceful ; another with a tambourine has a sort of Bassarid beauty. But the group of Apollo, Pegasus, and a Muse upon Parnassus, is a failure in its meaningless frigidity, while few of these subordinate compositions show power of conception or vigour of design.

Lanini, like Sodoma, was a native of Vercelli ; and though he was Ferrari's pupil, there is more in him of Luini or of Sodoma than of his master. He does not rise at any point to the height of these three great masters, but he shares some of Luini's and Sodoma's fine qualities, without having any of Ferrari's force. A visit to the mangled remnants of his frescoes in S. Caterina will repay the student of art. This was once, apparently, a double church, or a church with the hall and chapel of a *confraternità* appended to it. One portion of the building was painted with the history of the Saint ; and very lovely must this work have been, to judge by the fragments which have recently been rescued from whitewash, damp, and ruthless mutilation. What wonderful Lombard faces, half obliterated on the broken wall and mouldering plaster, smile upon us like drowned memories swimming up from the depths of oblivion ! Wherever three or four are grouped together, we find an exquisite little picture—an old woman and two young women in a doorway, for example, telling no story, but touching us with simple harmony of form. Nothing further is needed to render their grace intelligible. Indeed, knowing the faults of the school, we may seek some consolation by telling ourselves that these incomplete fragments yield Lanini's best. In the coved compartments of the roof, above the windows,

ran a row of dancing boys ; and these are still most beautifully modelled, though the pallor of recent whitewash is upon them. All the boys have blonde hair. They are naked, with scrolls or ribbons wreathed around them, adding to the airiness of their continual dance. Some of the loveliest are in a room used to stow away the lumber of the church—old boards and curtains, broken lanterns, candle-ends in tin sconces, the musty apparatus of festival adornments, and in the midst of all a battered, weather-beaten bier.

THE PIAZZA OF PIACENZA.

The great feature of Piacenza is its famous piazza—a romantically, picturesquely perfect square, surpassing the most daring attempts of the scene-painter, and realising a poet's dreams. The space is considerable, and many streets converge upon it at irregular angles. Its finest architectural feature is the antique Palace of the Commune : Gothic arcades of stone below, surmounted by a brick building with wonderfully delicate and varied terra-cotta work in the round-arched windows. Before this façade, on the marble pavement, prance the bronze equestrian statues of two Farnesi—insignificant men, exaggerated horses, flying drapery—as *barocco* as it is possible to be in style, but so splendidly toned with verdigris, so superb in their *bravura* attitude, and so happily placed in the line of two streets lending far vistas from the square into the town beyond, that it is difficult to criticise them seriously. They form, indeed, an important element in the pictorial effect, and enhance the terra-cotta work of the façade by the contrast of their colour.

The time to see this square is in evening twilight—that wonderful hour after sunset—when the people are strolling on the pavement, polished to a mirror by the pacing of successive centuries, and when the cavalry soldiers group themselves at

the angles under the lamp-posts or beneath the dimly-lighted Gothic arches of the Palace. This is the magical mellow hour to be sought by lovers of the picturesque in all the towns of Italy, the hour which, by its tender blendings of sallow western lights with glimmering lamps, casts the veil of half shadow over any crudeness and restores the injuries of Time ; the hour when all the tints of these old buildings are intensified, etherealised, and harmonised by one pervasive glow. When I last saw Piacenza, it had been raining all day ; and ere sundown a clearing had come from the Alps, followed by fresh threatenings of thunderstorms. The air was very liquid. There was a tract of yellow sunset sky to westward, a faint new moon half swathed in mist above, and over all the north a huge towered thundercloud kept flashing distant lightnings. The pallid primrose of the West, forced down and reflected back from that vast bank of tempest, gave unearthly beauty to the hues of church and palace—tender half-tones of violet and russet paling into greys and yellows on what in daylight seemed but dull red brick. Even the uncompromising façade of S. Francesco helped ; and the Dukes were like statues of the ‘Gran Commendatore,’ waiting for Don Giovanni’s invitation.

MASOLINO AT CASTIGLIONE D’OLONA.

Through the loveliest Arcadian scenery of woods and fields and rushing waters the road leads downward from Varese to Castiglione. The Collegiate Church stands on a leafy hill above the town, with fair prospect over groves and waterfalls and distant mountains. Here in the choir is a series of frescoes by Masolino da Panicale, the master of Masaccio, who painted them about the year 1428. ‘Masolinus de Florentia pinxit’ decides their authorship. The histories of the Virgin, S. Stephen and S. Lawrence, are represented : but the injuries of time and neglect have been so great that it is difficult to judge them

fairly. All we feel for certain is that Masolino had not yet escaped from the traditional Giottesque mannerism. Only a group of Jews stoning Stephen, and Lawrence before the tribunal, remind us by dramatic energy of the Brancacci Chapel.

The Baptistry frescoes, dealing with the legend of S. John, show a remarkable advance ; and they are luckily in better preservation. A soldier lifting his two-handed sword to strike off the Baptist's head is a vigorous figure, full of Florentine realism. Also in the Baptism in Jordan we are reminded of Masaccio by an excellent group of bathers—one man taking off his hose, another putting them on again, a third standing naked with his back turned, and a fourth shivering half-dressed with a look of curious sadness on his face. The nude has been carefully studied and well realised. The finest composition of this series is a large panel representing a double action—Salome at Herod's table begging for the Baptist's head, and then presenting it to her mother Herodias. The costumes are quattrocento Florentine, exactly rendered. Salome is a graceful slender creature ; the two women who regard her offering to Herodias with mingled curiosity and horror, are well conceived. The background consists of a mountain landscape in Masaccio's simple manner, a rich Renaissance villa, and an open loggia. The architecture perspective is scientifically accurate, and a frieze of boys with garlands on the villa is in the best manner of Florentine sculpture. On the mountain side, diminished in scale, is a group of elders, burying the body of S. John. These are massed together and robed in the style of Masaccio, and have his virile dignity of form and action. Indeed this interesting wall-painting furnishes an epitome of Florentine art, in its intentions and achievements, during the first half of the fifteenth century. The colour is strong and brilliant, and the execution solid.

The margin of the Salome panel has been used for scratching

the Chronicle of Castiglione. I read one date, 1568, several of the next century, the record of a duel between two gentlemen, and many inscriptions to this effect, ‘Erodiana Regina’ ‘Omnia praetereunt,’ etc. A dirty one-eyed fellow keeps the place. In my presence he swept the frescoes over with a scratchy broom, flaying their upper surface in profound unconsciousness of mischief. The armour of the executioner has had its steel colours almost rubbed off by this infernal process. Damp and cobwebs are far kinder.

THE CERTOSA.

The Certosa of Pavia leaves upon the mind an impression of bewildering sumptuousness : nowhere else are costly materials so combined with a lavish expenditure of the rarest art. Those who have only once been driven round together with the crew of sight-seers, can carry little away but the memory of lapis-lazuli and bronze-work, inlaid agates and labyrinthine sculpture, cloisters tenantless in silence, fair painted faces smiling from dark corners on the senseless crowd, trim gardens with rows of pink primroses in spring, and of bigonia in autumn, blooming beneath colonnades of glowing terra-cotta. The striking contrast between the Gothic of the interior and the Renaissance façade, each in its own kind perfect, will also be remembered ; and thoughts of the two great houses, Visconti and Sforza, to whose pride of power it is a monument, may be blended with the recollection of art-treasures alien to their spirit.

Two great artists, Ambrogio Borgognone and Antonio Amadeo, are the presiding genii of the Certosa. To minute criticism, based upon the accurate investigation of records and the comparison of styles, must be left the task of separating their work from that of numerous collaborators. But it is none the less certain that the keynote of the whole music is struck by them. Amadeo, the master of the Colleoni chapel

at Bergamo, was both sculptor and architect. If the façade of the Certosa be not absolutely his creation, he had a hand in the distribution of its masses and the detail of its ornaments. The only fault in this, otherwise faultless product of the purest quattrocento inspiration, is that the façade is a frontispiece, with hardly any structural relation to the Church it masks : and this, though serious from the point of view of architecture, is no abatement of its sculpturesque and picturesque refinement. At first sight it seems a wilderness of loveliest reliefs and statues—of angel faces, fluttering raiment, flowing hair, love-laden youths, and stationary figures of grave saints, mid wayward tangles of acanthus and wild vine and cupid-laden foliage ; but the subordination of these decorative details to the main design, clear, rhythmical, and lucid, like a chant of Pergolese or Stradella, will enrapture one who has the sense for unity evoked from divers elements, for thought subduing all caprices to the harmony of beauty. It is not possible elsewhere in Italy to find the instinct of the earlier Renaissance, so amorous in its expenditure of rare material, so lavish in its bestowal of the costliest workmanship on ornamental episodes, brought into truer keeping with a pure and simple structural effect.

All the great sculptor-architects of Lombardy worked in succession on this miracle of beauty ; and this may account for the sustained perfection of style, which nowhere suffers from the languor of exhaustion in the artist or from repetition of motives. It remains the triumph of North Italian genius, exhibiting qualities of tenderness and self-abandonment to inspiration, which we lack in the severer masterpieces of the Tuscan school.

To Borgognone is assigned the painting of the roof in nave and choir—exceeding rich, varied, and withal in sympathy with stately Gothic style. Borgognone again is said to have designed the saints and martyrs worked in *tarsia* for the choir-stalls. His frescoes are in some parts well preserved, as in the lovely

little Madonna at the end of the south chapel, while the great fresco above the window in the south transept has an historical value that renders it interesting in spite of partial decay. Borgognone's oil pictures throughout the church prove, if such proof were needed after inspection of the altar-piece in our National Gallery, that he was one of the most powerful and original painters of Italy, blending the repose of the earlier masters and their consummate workmanship with a profound sensibility to the finest shades of feeling and the rarest forms of natural beauty. He selected an exquisite type of face for his young men and women ; on his old men he bestowed singular gravity and dignity. His saints are a society of strong, pure, restful, earnest souls, in whom the passion of deepest emotion is transfigured by habitual calm. The brown and golden harmonies he loved, are gained without sacrifice of lustre : there is a self-restraint in his colouring which corresponds to the reserve of his emotion ; and though a regret sometimes rises in our mind that he should have modelled the light and shade upon his faces with a brusque, unpleasing hardness, their pallor dwells within our memory as something delicately sought if not consummately attained. In a word, Borgognone was a true Lombard of the best time. The very imperfection of his flesh-painting repeats in colour what the greatest Lombard sculptors sought in stone—a sharpness of relief that passes over into angularity. This brusqueness was the counterpoise to tenderness of feeling and intensity of fancy in these northern artists. Of all Borgognone's pictures in the Certosa I should select the altar-piece of S. Siro with S. Lawrence and S. Stephen and two Fathers of the Church, for its fusion of this master's qualities.

The Certosa is a wilderness of lovely workmanship. From Borgognone's majesty we pass into the quiet region of Luini's Christian grace, or mark the influence of Leonardo on that rare Assumption of Madonna by his pupil, Andrea Solari.

Like everything touched by the Lionardesque spirit, this great picture was left unfinished : yet Northern Italy has nothing finer to show than the landscape, outspread in its immeasurable purity of calm, behind the grouped Apostles and the ascendant Mother of Heaven. The feeling of that happy region between the Alps and Lombardy, where there are many waters—*et tacitos sine labe lacus sine murmure rivos*—and where the last spurs of the mountains sink in undulations to the plain, has passed into this azure vista, just as all Umbria is suggested in a twilight background of young Raphael or Perugino.

The portraits of the Dukes of Milan and their families carry us into a very different realm of feeling. Medallions above the doors of sacristy and chancel, stately figures reared aloft beneath gigantic canopies, men and women slumbering with folded hands upon their marble biers—we read in all those sculptured forms a strange record of human restlessness, resolved into the quiet of the tomb. The iniquities of Gian Galeazzo Visconti, *il gran Biscione*, the blood-thirst of Gian Maria, the dark designs of Filippo and his secret vices, Francesco Sforza's treason, Galeazzo Maria's vanities and lusts ; their tyrants' dread of thunder and the knife ; their awful deaths by pestilence and the assassin's poignard ; their selfishness, oppression, cruelty and fraud ; the murders of their kinsmen; their labyrinthine plots and acts of broken faith ;—all is tranquil now, and we can say to each what Bosola found for the Duchess of Malfi ere her execution :—

Much you had of land and rent ;
Your length in clay's now competent :
A long war disturbed your mind ;
Here your perfect peace is signed !

Some of these faces are commonplace, with *bourgeois* cunning written on the heavy features ; one is bluff, another stolid, a third bloated, a fourth stately. The sculptors have dealt fairly with all, and not one has the lineaments of utter baseness.

To Cristoforo Solari's statues of Lodovico Sforza and his wife, Beatrice d'Este, the palm of excellence in art and of historical interest must be awarded. Sculpture has rarely been more dignified and true to life than here. The woman with her short clustering curls, the man with his strong face, are resting after that long fever which brought woe to Italy, to Europe a new age, and to the boasted minion of Fortune a slow death in the prison palace of Loches. Attired in ducal robes, they lie in state ; and the sculptor has carved the lashes on their eyelids, heavy with death's marmoreal sleep. He at least has passed no judgment on their crimes. Let us too bow and leave their memories to the historian's pen, their spirits to God's mercy.

After all wanderings in this Temple of Art, we return to Antonio Amadeo, to his long-haired seraphs playing on the lutes of Paradise, to his angels of the Passion with their fluttering robes and arms outspread in agony, to his saints and satyrs mingled on pilasters of the marble doorways, his delicate *Lavabo* decorations, and his hymns of piety expressed in noble forms of weeping women and dead Christs. Wherever we may pass, this master-spirit of the Lombard style entralls attention. His curious treatment of drapery as though it were made of crumpled paper, and his trick of enhancing relief by sharp angles and attenuated limbs, do not detract from his peculiar charm. That is his way, very different from Donatello's, of attaining to the maximum of life and lightness in the stubborn vehicle of stone. Nor do all the riches of the choir—those multitudes of singing angels, those Ascensions and Assumptions, and innumerable bas-reliefs of gleaming marble moulded into softest wax by mastery of art—distract our eyes from the single round medallion, not larger than a common plate, inscribed by him upon the front of the high altar. Perhaps, if one who loved Amadeo were bidden to point out his masterpiece, he would lead the way at once to this. The

space is small : yet it includes the whole tragedy of the Passion. Christ is lying dead among the women on his mother's lap, and there are pitying angels in the air above. One woman lifts his arm, another makes her breast a pillow for his head. Their agony is hushed, but felt in every limb and feature ; and the extremity of suffering is seen in each articulation of the worn and wounded form just taken from the cross. It would be too painful, were not the harmony of art so rare, the interlacing of those many figures in a simple round so exquisite. The noblest tranquillity and the most passionate emotion are here fused in a manner of adorable naturalness.

From the church it is delightful to escape into the cloisters, flooded with sunlight, where the swallows skim, and the brown hawks circle, and the mason bees are at work upon their cells among the carvings. The arcades of the two cloisters are the final triumph of Lombard terra-cotta. The memory fails before such infinite invention, such facility and felicity of execution. Wreaths of cupids gliding round the arches among grape-bunches and bird-haunted foliage of vine ; rows of angels, like rising and setting planets, some smiling and some grave, ascending and descending by the Gothic curves ; saints stationary on their pedestals, and faces leaning from the rounds above ; crowds of cherubs, and courses of stars, and acanthus leaves in woven lines, and ribands incessantly inscribed with *Ave Maria !* Then, over all, the rich red light and purple shadows of the brick, than which no substance sympathises more completely with the sky of solid blue above, the broad plain space of waving summer grass beneath our feet.

It is now late afternoon, and when evening comes, the train will take us back to Milan. There is yet a little while to rest tired eyes and strained spirits among the willows and the poplars by the monastery wall. Through that grey-green leafage, young with early spring, the pinnacles of the Certosa

leap like flames into the sky. The rice-fields are under water, far and wide, shining like burnished gold beneath the level light now near to sun-down. Frogs are croaking ; those persistent frogs, whom the Muses have ordained to sing for aye, in spite of Bion and all tuneful poets dead. We sit and watch the water-snakes, the busy rats, the hundred creatures swarming in the fat well-watered soil. Nightingales here and there, newcomers, tune their timid April song : but, strangest of all sounds in such a place, my comrade from the Grisons jodels forth an Alpine cowherd's melody. *Auf den Alpen droben ist ein herrliches Leben !*

Did the echoes of Gian Galeazzo's convent ever wake to such a tune as this before ?

SAN MAURIZIO.

The student of art in Italy, after mastering the characters of different styles and epochs, finds a final satisfaction in the contemplation of buildings designed and decorated by one master, or by groups of artists interpreting the spirit of a single period. Such supreme monuments of the national genius are not very common, and they are therefore the more precious. Giotto's Chapel at Padua ; the Villa Farnesina at Rome, built by Peruzzi and painted in fresco by Raphael and Sodoma ; the Palazzo del Te at Mantua, Giulio Romano's masterpiece ; the Scuola di San Rocco, illustrating the Venetian Renaissance at its climax, might be cited among the most splendid of these achievements. In the church of the Monastero Maggiore at Milan, dedicated to S. Maurizio, Lombard architecture and fresco-painting may be studied in this rare combination. The monastery itself, one of the oldest in Milan, formed a retreat for cloistered virgins following the rule of S. Benedict. It may have been founded as early as the tenth century ; but its church was rebuilt in the first two decades of the sixteenth,

between 1503 and 1519, and was immediately afterwards decorated with frescoes by Luini and his pupils. Gian Giacomo Dolcebono, architect and sculptor, called by his fellow-craftsmen *magistro di taliare pietre*, gave the design, at once simple and harmonious, which was carried out with hardly any deviation from his plan. The church is a long parallelogram, divided into two unequal portions, the first and smaller for the public, the second for the nuns. The walls are pierced with rounded and pilastered windows, ten on each side, four of which belong to the outer and six to the inner section. The dividing wall or septum rises to the point from which the groinings of the roof spring; and round three sides of the whole building, north, east, and south, runs a gallery for the use of the convent. The altars of the inner and outer church are placed against the septum, back to back, with certain differences of structure that need not be described. Simple and severe, S. Maurizio owes its architectural beauty wholly and entirely to purity of line and perfection of proportion. There is a prevailing spirit of repose, a sense of space, fair, lightsome, and adapted to serene moods of the meditative fancy in this building, which is singularly at variance with the religious mysticism and imaginative grandeur of a Gothic edifice. The principal beauty of the church, however, is its tone of colour. Every square inch is covered with fresco or rich woodwork, mellowed by time into that harmony of tints which blends the work of greater and lesser artists in one golden hue of brown. Round the arcades of the convent-loggia run delicate arabesques with faces of fair female saints—Catherine, Agnes, Lucy, Agatha,—gem-like or star-like, gazing from their gallery upon the church below. The Luinesque smile is on their lips and in their eyes, quiet, refined, as though the emblems of their martyrdom brought back no thought of pain to break the Paradise of rest in which they dwell. There are twenty-six in all, a sisterhood of stainless souls, the lilies of Love's

garden planted round Christ's throne. Soldier saints are mingled with them in still smaller rounds above the windows, chosen to illustrate the virtues of an order which renounced the world. To decide whose hand produced these masterpieces of Lombard suavity and grace, or whether more than one, would not be easy. Near the altar we can perhaps trace the style of Bartolommeo Suardi in an Annunciation painted on the spandrels—that heroic style, large and noble, known to us by the chivalrous S. Martin and the glorified Madonna of the Brera frescoes. It is not impossible that the male saints of the loggia may be also his, through a tenderer touch, a something more nearly Lionardesque in its quietude, must be discerned in Lucy and her sisters. The whole of the altar in this inner church belongs to Luini. Were it not for darkness and decay, we should pronounce this series of the Passion in nine great compositions, with saints and martyrs and torch-bearing genii, to be one of his most ambitious and successful efforts. As it is, we can but judge in part ; the adolescent beauty of Sebastian, the grave compassion of S. Rocco, the classical perfection of the cupid with lighted tapers, the gracious majesty of women smiling on us sideways from their Lombard eyelids—these remain to haunt our memory, emerging from the shadows of the vault above.

The inner church, as is fitting, excludes all worldly elements. We are in the presence of Christ's agony, relieved and tempered by the sunlight of those beauteous female faces. All is solemn here, still as the convent, pure as the meditations of a novice. We pass the septum, and find ourselves in the outer church appropriated to the laity. Above the high altar the whole wall is covered with Luini's loveliest work, in excellent light and far from ill preserved. The space divides into eight compartments. A Pietà, an Assumption, Saints and Founders of the church, group themselves under the influence of Luini's harmonising colour into one symphonious whole. But the

places of distinction are reserved for two great benefactors of the convent, Alessandro de' Bentivogli and his wife, Ippolita Sforza. When the Bentivogli were expelled from Bologna by the Papal forces, Alessandro settled at Milan, where he dwelt, honoured by the Sforzas and allied to them by marriage, till his death in 1532. He was buried in the monastery by the side of his sister Alessandra, a nun of the order. Luini has painted the illustrious exile in his habit as he lived. He is kneeling, as though in ever-lasting adoration of the altar mystery, attired in a long black senatorial robe trimmed with furs. In his left hand he holds a book; and above his pale, serenely noble face is a little black berretta. Saints attend him, as though attesting to his act of faith. Opposite kneels Ippolita, his wife, the brilliant queen of fashion, the witty leader of society, to whom Bandello dedicated his *Novelle*, and whom he praised as both incomparably beautiful and singularly learned. Her queenly form is clothed from head to foot in white brocade, slashed and trimmed with gold lace, and on her forehead is a golden circlet. She has the proud port of a princess, the beauty of a woman past her prime but stately, the indescribable dignity of attitude which no one but Luini could have rendered so majestically sweet. In her hand is a book; and she, like Alessandro, has her saintly sponsors, Agnes and Catherine and S. Scolastica.

Few pictures bring the splendid Milanese Court so vividly before us as these portraits of the Bentivogli: they are, moreover, very precious for the light they throw on what Luini could achieve in the secular style so rarely touched by him. Great, however, as are these frescoes, they are far surpassed both in value and interest by his paintings in the side chapel of S. Catherine. Here more than anywhere else, more even than at Saronno or Lugano, do we feel the true distinction of Luini—his unrivalled excellence as a colourist, his power over pathos, the refinement of his feeling, and the peculiar beauty of his

favourite types. The chapel was decorated at the expense of a Milanese advocate, Francesco Besozzi, who died in 1529. It is he who is kneeling, grey-haired and bare-headed, under the protection of S. Catherine of Alexandria, intently gazing at Christ unbound from the scourging pillar. On the other side stand S. Lawrence and S. Stephen, pointing to the Christ and looking at us, as though their lips were framed to say : ‘Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto his sorrow.’ Even the soldiers who have done their cruel work, seem softened. They untie the cords tenderly, and support the fainting form, too weak to stand alone. What sadness in the lovely faces of S. Catherine and Lawrence ! What divine anguish in the loosened limbs and bending body of Christ ; what piety in the adoring old man ! All the moods proper to this supreme tragedy of the faith are touched as in some tenor song with low accompaniment of viols ; for it was Luini’s special province to feel profoundly and to express musically. The very depth of the Passion is there ; and yet there is no discord.

Just in proportion to this unique faculty for yielding a melodious representation of the most intense moments of stationary emotion, was his inability to deal with a dramatic subject. The first episode of S. Catherine’s execution, when the wheel was broken and the executioners struck by lightning, is painted in this chapel without energy and with a lack of composition that betrays the master’s indifference to his subject. Far different is the second episode when Catherine is about to be beheaded. The executioner has raised his sword to strike. She, robed in brocade of black and gold, so cut as to display the curve of neck and back, while the bosom is covered, leans her head above her praying hands, and waits the blow in sweetest resignation. Two soldiers stand at some distance in a landscape of hill and meadow ; and far up are seen the angels carrying her body to its tomb upon mount Sinai. I cannot find words or summon courage to describe

the beauty of this picture ; its atmosphere of holy peace, the dignity of its composition, the golden richness of its colouring. The most tragic situation has here again been alchemized by Luini's magic into a pure idyll, without the loss of power, without the sacrifice of edification.

S. Catherine in this incomparable fresco is a portrait, the history of which so strikingly illustrates the relation of the arts to religion on the one hand, and to life on the other, in the age of the Renaissance, that it cannot be omitted. At the end of his fourth Novella, having related the life of the Contessa di Cellant, Bandello says : ‘And so the poor woman was beheaded ; such was the end of her unbridled desires ; and he who would fain see her painted to the life, let him go to the Church of the Monistero Maggiore, and there will he behold her portrait.’ The Contessa di Cellant was the only child of a rich usurer who lived at Casal Monferrato. Her mother was a Greek ; and she was a girl of such exquisite beauty, that, in spite of her low origin, she became the wife of the noble Ermes Visconti in her sixteenth year. He took her to live with him at Milan, where she frequented the house of the Bentivogli, but none other. Her husband told Bandello that he knew her temper better than to let her visit with the freedom of the Milanese ladies. Upon his death, while she was little more than twenty, she retired to Casale and led a gay life among many lovers. One of these, the Count of Cellant in the Val d’Aosta, became her second husband, conquered by her extraordinary loveliness. They could not, however, agree together. She left him, and established herself at Pavia. Rich with her father’s wealth and still of most seductive beauty, she now abandoned herself to a life of profligacy. Three among her lovers must be named : Ardizzino Valperga, Count of Masino ; Roberto Sanseverino, of the princely Naples family ; and Don Pietro di Cardona, a Sicilian. With each of the two first she quarrelled, and separately besought each to murder the other.

They were friends and frustrated her plans by communicating them to one another. The third loved her with the insane passion of a very young man. What she desired, he promised to do blindly ; and she bade him murder his two predecessors in her favour. At this time she was living at Milan, where the Duke of Bourbon was acting as viceroy for the Emperor. Don Pietro took twenty-five armed men of his household, and waylaid the Count of Masino, as he was returning with his brother and eight or nine servants, late one night from supper. Both the brothers and the greater part of their suite were killed : but Don Pietro was caught. He revealed the atrocity of his mistress ; and she was sent to prison. Incapable of proving her innocence, and prevented from escaping, in spite of 15,000 golden crowns with which she hoped to bribe her jailors, she was finally beheaded. Thus did a vulgar and infamous Messalina, distinguished only by rare beauty, furnish Luini with a S. Catherine for this masterpiece of pious art ! The thing seems scarcely credible. Yet Bandello lived in Milan while the Church of S. Maurizio was being painted ; nor does he show the slightest sign of disgust at the discord between the Contessa's life and her artistic presentation in the person of a royal martyr.

A HUMANIST'S MONUMENT.

In the Sculpture Gallery of the Brera is preserved a fair white marble tomb, carved by that excellent Lombard sculptor, Agostino Busti. The epitaph runs as follows :—

En Virtutem Mortis nesciam.
Vivet Lancinus Curtius
Sæcula per omnia
Quascunque lustrans oras,
Tantum possunt Camoenæ.

'Look here on Virtue that knows nought of Death ! Lancinus

Curtius shall live through all the centuries, and visit every shore of earth. Such power have the Muses.' The time-worn poet reclines, as though sleeping or resting, ready to be waked ; his head is covered with flowing hair, and crowned with laurel ; it leans upon his left hand. On either side of his couch stand cupids or genii with torches turned to earth. Above is a group of the three Graces, flanked by winged Pegasi. Higher up are throned two Victories with palms, and at the top a naked Fame. We need not ask who was Lancinus Curtius. He is forgotten, and his virtue has not saved him from oblivion ; though he strove in his lifetime, *pro virili parte*, for the palm that Busti carved upon his grave. Yet his monument teaches in short compass a deep lesson ; and his epitaph sums up the dream which lured the men of Italy in the Renaissance to their doom. We see before us sculptured in this marble the ideal of the humanistic poet-scholar's life : Love, Grace, the Muse, and Nakedness, and Glory. There is not a single intrusive thought derived from Christianity. The end for which the man lived was Pagan. His hope was earthly fame. Yet his name survives, if this indeed be a survival, not in those winged verses which were to carry him abroad across the earth, but in the marble of a cunning craftsman, scanned now and then by a wandering scholar's eye in the half-darkness of a vault.

THE MONUMENT OF GASTON DE FOIX IN THE BRERA.

The hero of Ravenna lies stretched upon his back in the hollow of a bier covered with laced drapery ; and his head rests on richly ornamented cushions. These decorative accessories, together with the minute work of his scabbard, wrought in the fanciful mannerism of the *cinquecento*, serve to enhance the statuesque simplicity of the young soldier's effigy. The contrast between so much of richness in the merely subordinate details, and this sublime severity of treatment in the person of the hero,

is truly and touchingly dramatic. There is a smile as of content in death, upon his face ; and the features are exceedingly beautiful—with the beauty of a boy, almost of a woman. The heavy hair is cut straight above the forehead and straight over the shoulders, falling in massive clusters. A delicately sculptured laurel branch is woven into a victor's crown, and laid lightly on the tresses it scarcely seems to clasp. So fragile is this wreath that it does not break the pure outline of the boy-conqueror's head. The armour is quite plain. So is the surcoat. Upon the swelling bust, that seems fit harbour for a hero's heart, there lies the collar of an order composed of cockleshells ; and this is all the ornament given to the figure. The hands are clasped across a sword laid flat upon the breast, and placed between the legs. Upon the chin is a little tuft of hair, parted, and curling either way ; for the victor of Ravenna, like the Hermies of Homer, was *πρῶτον ὑπηρήφης*, ‘a youth of princely blood, whose beard hath just begun to grow, for whom the season of bloom is in its prime of grace.’ The whole statue is the idealisation of *virtù*—that quality so highly prized by the Italians and the ancients, so well fitted for commemoration in the arts. It is the apotheosis of human life resolved into undying memory because of one great deed. It is the supreme portrait in modern times of a young hero, chiselled by artists belonging to a race no longer heroic, but capable of comprehending and expressing the æsthetic charm of heroism. Standing before it, we may say of Gaston what Arrian wrote to Hadrian of Achilles :—‘That he was a hero, if hero ever lived, I cannot doubt ; for his birth and blood were noble, and he was beautiful, and his spirit was mighty, and he passed in youth's prime away from men.’ Italian sculpture, under the condition of the *cinquecento*, had indeed no more congenial theme than this of bravery and beauty, youth and fame, immortal honour and untimely death ; nor could any sculptor of death have poetised the theme more thoroughly than Agostino Busti,

whose simple instinct, unlike that of Michelangelo, led him to subordinate his own imagination to the pathos of reality.

SARONNO.

The Church of Saronno is a pretty building with a Bramantesque cupola, standing among meadows at some distance from the little town. It is the object of a special cult, which draws pilgrims from the neighbouring country side ; but the concourse is not large enough to load the sanctuary with unnecessary wealth. Everything is very quiet in the holy place, and the offerings of the pious seem to have been only just enough to keep the building and its treasures of art in repair. The church consists of a nave, a central cupola, a vestibule leading to the choir, the choir itself, and a small tribune behind the choir. No other single building in North Italy can boast so much that is first-rate of the work of Luini and Gaudenzio Ferrari.

The cupola is raised on a sort of drum composed of twelve pieces, perforated with round windows and supported on four massive piers. On the level of the eye are frescoes by Luini of S. Rocco, S. Sebastian, S. Christopher and S. Antony—by no means in his best style, and inferior to all his other paintings in this church. The Sebastian, for example, shows an effort to vary the traditional treatment of this saint. He is tied in a sprawling attitude to a tree ; and little of Luini's special pathos or sense of beauty—the melody of idyllic grace made spiritual—appears in him. These four saints are on the piers. Above are frescoes from the early Bible history by Lanini, painted in continuation of Ferrari's medallions from the story of Adam expelled from Paradise, which fill the space beneath the cupola, leading the eye upward to Ferrari's masterpiece.

The dome itself is crowded with a host of angels singing and playing upon instruments of music. At each of the twelve angles of the drum stands a coryphaeus of this celestial

choir, full length, with waving drapery. Higher up, the golden-haired, broad-winged, divine creatures are massed together, filling every square inch of the vault with colour. Yet there is no confusion. The simplicity of the selected motive and the necessities of the place acted like a check on Ferrari, who, in spite of his dramatic impulse, could not tell a story coherently or fill a canvas with harmonised variety. There is no trace of his violence here. Though the motion of music runs through the whole multitude like a breeze, though the joy expressed is a real *tripudio celeste*, not one of all these angels flings his arms abroad or makes a movement that disturbs the rhythm. We feel that they are keeping time and resting quietly, each in his appointed seat, as though the sphere was circling with them round the throne of God, who is their centre and their source of gladness. Unlike Correggio and his imitators, Ferrari has introduced no clouds, and has in no case made the legs of his angels prominent. It is a mass of noble faces and voluminously robed figures, emerging each above the other like flowers in a vase. Each too has specific character, while all are robust and full of life, intent upon the service set them. Their instruments of music are all the lutes and viols, flutes, cymbals, drums, fifes, citherns, organs, and harps that Ferrari's day could show. The scale of colour, as usual with Ferrari, is a little heavy; nor are the tints satisfactorily harmonised. But the vigour and invention of the whole work would atone for minor defects of far greater consequence.

It is natural, beneath this dome, to turn aside and think one moment of Correggio at Parma. Before the *macchinisti* of the seventeenth century had vulgarised the motive, Correggio's bold attempt to paint heaven in flight from earth—earth left behind in the persons of the Apostles standing round the empty tomb, heaven soaring upward with a spiral vortex into the abyss of light above—had an originality which set at nought all criticism. There is such ecstasy of jubilation, such

rapturous rapidity of flight, that we who strain our eyes from below, feel we are in the darkness of the grave which Mary left. A kind of controlling rhythm for the composition is gained by placing Gabriel, Madonna, and Christ at three points in the swirl of angels. Nevertheless, composition—the presiding all-controlling intellect—is just what makes itself felt by absence ; and Correggio's special qualities of light and colour have now so far vanished from the cupola of the Duomo that the constructive poverty is not disguised. Here, if anywhere in painting, we may apply Goethe's words—*Gefühl ist Alles.*

If then we return to Ferarri's angels at Saronno, we find that the painter of Varallo chose a safer though a far more modest theme. Nor did he expose himself to that most cruel of all degradations which the ethereal genius of Correggio has suffered from incompetent imitators. To daub a tawdry and superficial reproduction of those Parmese frescoes, to fill the cupolas of Italy with veritable *guazzetti di rane*, was comparatively easy ; and between our intelligence and what remains of that stupendous masterpiece of boldness, crowd a thousand memories of such ineptitude. On the other hand, nothing but solid work and conscientious inspiration could enable any workman, however able, to follow Ferrari in the path struck out by him at Saronno. His cupola has had no imitator ; and its only rival is the noble pendant painted at Varallo by his own hand, of angels in adoring anguish round the Cross.

In the ante-choir of the sanctuary are Luini's priceless frescoes of the *Marriage of the Virgin*, and the *Dispute with the Doctors*.¹ Their execution is flawless, and they are perfectly preserved. If criticism before such admirable examples of so excellent a master be permissible, it may be questioned whether the figures are not too crowded, whether the groups are sufficiently varied and connected by rhythmic

¹ Both these and the large frescoes in the choir have been chromolithographed by the Arundel Society.

lines. Yet the concords of yellow and orange with blue in the *Sposalizio*, and the blendings of dull violet and red in the *Disputa*, make up for much of stiffness. Here, as in the Chapel of S. Catherine at Milan, we feel that Luini was the greatest colourist among *frescanti*. In the *Sposalizio* the female heads are singularly noble and idyllically graceful. Some of the young men too have Luini's special grace and abundance of golden hair. In the *Disputa* the gravity and dignity of old men are above all things striking.

Passing into the choir, we find on either hand the *Adoration of the Magi* and the *Purification of the Virgin*, two of Luini's divinest frescoes. Above them in lunettes are four Evangelists and four Latin Fathers, with four Sibyls. Time and neglect have done no damage here : and here, again, perforce we notice perfect mastery of colour in fresco. The blues detach themselves too much, perhaps, from the rest of the colouring ; and that is all a devil's advocate could say. It is possible that the absence of blue makes the S. Catherine frescoes in the Monastero Maggiore at Milan surpass all other works of Luini. But nowhere else has he shown more beauty and variety in detail than here. The group of women led by Joseph, the shepherd carrying the lamb upon his shoulder, the girl with a basket of white doves, the child with an apple on the altar-steps, the lovely youth in the foreground heedless of the scene ; all these are idyllic incidents treated with the purest, the serenest, the most spontaneous, the truest, most instinctive sense of beauty. The landscape includes a view of Saronno, and an episodical picture of the *Flight into Egypt* where a white-robed angel leads the way. All these lovely things are in the *Purification*, which is dated *Bernardinus Lovinus pinxit, MDXXV.*

The fresco of the *Magi* is less notable in detail, and in general effect is more spoiled by obtrusive blues. There is, however, one young man of wholly Lionardesque loveliness, whose divine innocence of adolescence, unalloyed by serious

thought, unstirred by passions, almost forces a comparison with Sodoma. The only painter who approaches Luini in what may be called the Lombard, to distinguish it from the Venetian idyll, is Sodoma ; and the work of his which comes nearest to Luini's masterpieces is the legend of S. Benedict, at Monte Oliveto, near Siena. Yet Sodoma had not all Luini's innocence or *naïveté*. If he added something slightly humorous which has an indefinite charm, he lacked that freshness as of "cool, meek-blooded flowers" and boyish voices, which fascinates us in Luini. Sodoma was closer to the earth, and feared not to impregnate what he saw of beauty with the fiercer passions of his nature. If Luini had felt passion, who shall say ? It appears nowhere in his work, where life is toned to a religious joyousness. When Shelley compared the poetry of the Theocritean amourists to the perfume of the tuberose, and that of the earlier Greek poets to "a meadow-gale of June, which mingles the fragrance of all the flowers of the field," he supplied us with critical images which may not unfairly be used to point the distinction between Sodoma at Monte Oliveto and Luini at Saronno.

THE CASTELLO OF FERRARA.

Is it possible that the patron saints of cities should mould the temper of the people to their own likeness? S. George, the chivalrous, is champion of Ferrara. His is the marble group above the Cathedral porch, so feudal in its medieval pomp. He and S. Michael are painted in fresco over the south portcullis of the Castle. His lustrous armour gleams with Giorgionesque brilliancy from Dossi's masterpiece in the Pinacoteca. That Ferrara, the only place in Italy where chivalry struck any root, should have had S. George for patron, is at any rate significant.

The best preserved relic of princely feudal life in Italy is this Castello of the Este family, with its sombre moat, chained

drawbridges, doleful dungeons, and unnumbered tragedies, each one of which may be compared with Parisina's history. I do not want to dwell on these things now. It is enough to remember the Castello, built of ruddiest brick, time-mellowed with how many centuries of sun and soft sea-air, as it appeared upon the close of one tempestuous day. Just before evening the rain-clouds parted and the sun flamed out across the misty Lombard plain. The Castello burned like a hero's funeral pyre, and round its high-built turrets swallows circled in the warm blue air. On the moat slept shadows, mixed with flowers of sunset, tossed from pinnacle and gable. Then the sky changed. A roof of thunder-cloud spread overhead with the rapidity of tempest. The dying sun gathered his last strength against it, fretting those steel-blue arches with crimson ; and all the fierce light, thrown from vault to vault of cloud, was reflected back as from a shield, and cast in blots and patches on the buildings. The Castle towered up rosy-red and shadowy sombre, enshrined, embosomed in those purple clouds ; and momently ran lightning forks like rapiers through the growing mass. Everything around, meanwhile, was quiet in the grass-grown streets. The only sound was a high, clear boy's voice chanting an opera tune.

PETRARCH'S TOMB AT ARQUA.

The drive from Este along the skirts of the Euganean Hills to Arqua takes one through a country which is tenderly beautiful, because of its contrast between little peaked mountains and the plain. It is not a grand landscape. It lacks all that makes the skirts of Alps and Apennines sublime. Its charm is a certain mystery and repose—an undefined sense of the neighbouring Adriatic, a pervading consciousness of Venice unseen, but felt from far away. From the terraces of Arqua the eye ranges across olive trees, laurels, and pomegranates on

the southern slopes, to the misty level land that melts into the sea, with churches and tall campanili like gigantic galleys setting sail for fairyland over ‘the foam of perilous seas forlorn.’ Let a blue-black shadow from a thunder-cloud be cast upon this plain, and let one ray of sunlight strike a solitary bell-tower :—it burns with palest flame of rose against the steely dark, and in its slender shaft and shell-like tint of pink all Venice is foreseen.

The village church of Arqua stands upon one of these terraces, with a full stream of clearest water flowing by. On the little square before the church-door, where the peasants congregate at mass-time—open to the skies with all their stars and storms, girdled by the hills, and within hearing of the vocal stream—is Petrarch’s sepulchre. Fit resting-place for what remains to earth of such a poet’s clay! It is as though archangels, flying, had carried the marble chest and set it down here on the hillside, to be a sign and sanctuary for after-men. A simple rectilinear coffin, of smooth Verona *mandorlato*, raised on four thick columns, and closed by a heavy cippus-cover. Without emblems, allegories, or lamenting genii, this tomb of the great poet, the great awakener of Europe from mental lethargy, encircled by the hills, beneath the canopy of heaven, is impressive beyond the power of words. Bending here, we feel that Petrarch’s own winged thoughts and fancies, eternal and aërial, ‘forms more real than living man, nurslings of immortality,’ have congregated to be the ever-ministering and irremovable attendants on the shrine of one who, while he lived, was purest spirit in a veil of flesh.

ON A MOUNTAIN.

Milan is shining in sunset on those purple fields ; and a score of cities flash back the last red light, which shows each inequality and undulation of Lombardy outspread four thousand

feet beneath. Both ranges, Alps and Apennines, are clear to view ; and all the silvery lakes are over-canopied and brought into one picture by flame-litten mists. Monte Rosa lifts her crown of peaks above a belt of clouds into light of living fire. The Mischabelhörner and the Dom rest stationary angel-wings upon the rampart, which at this moment is the wall of heaven. The pyramid of distant Monte Viso burns like solid amethyst far, far away. Mont Cervin beckons to his brother, the gigantic Finsteraarhorn, across tracts of liquid ether. Bells are rising from the villages, now wrapped in gloom, between me and the glimmering lake. A hush of evening silence falls upon the ridges, cliffs, and forests of this billowy hill, ascending into wave-like crests, and toppling with awful chasms over the dark waters of Lugano. It is good to be alone here at this hour. Yet I must rise and go—passing through meadows, where white lilies sleep in silvery drifts, and asphodel is pale with spires of faintest rose, and narcissus dreams of his own beauty, loading the air with fragrance sweet as some love-music of Mozart. These fields want only the white figure of Persephone to make them poems : and in this twilight one might fancy that the queen had left her throne by Pluto's side, to mourn for her dead youth among the flowers uplifted between earth and heaven. Nay, they are poems now, these fields ; with that unchanging background of history, romance, and human life—the Lombard plain, against whose violet breadth the blossoms bend their faint heads to the evening air. Downward we hurry, on pathways where the beeches meet, by silent farms, by meadows honey-scented, deep in dew. The columbine stands tall and still on those green slopes of shadowy grass. The nightingale sings now, and now is hushed again. Streams murmur through the darkness, where the growth of trees, heavy with honeysuckle and wild rose, is thickest. Fireflies begin to flit above the growing corn. At last the plain is reached, and all the skies are tremulous with starlight. Alas, that we should

vibrate so obscurely to these harmonies of earth and heaven ! The inner finer sense of them seems somehow unattainable—that spiritual touch of soul evoking soul from nature, which should transfigure our dull mood of self into impersonal delight. Man needs to be a mytho-poet at some moments, or, better still, to be a mystic steeped through half-unconsciousness in the vast wonder of the world. Cold and untouched to poetry or piety by scenes that ought to blend the spirit in ourselves with spirit in the world without, we can but wonder how this phantom show of mystery and beauty will pass away from us—how soon—and we be where, see what, use all our sensibilities on aught or nought ?

SIC GENIUS.

In the picture-gallery at Modena there is a masterpiece of Dosso Dossi. The frame is old and richly carved ; and the painting, bordered by its beautiful dull gold, shines with the lustre of an emerald. In his happy moods Dosso set colour upon canvas, as no other painter out of Venice ever did ; and here he is at his happiest. The picture is the portrait of a jester, dressed in courtly clothes and with a feathered cap upon his head. He holds a lamb in his arms, and carries the legend, *Sic Genius*. Behind him is a landscape of exquisite brilliancy and depth. His face is young and handsome. Dosso has made it one most wonderful laugh. Even so perhaps laughed Yorick. Nowhere else have I seen a laugh thus painted : not violent, not loud, although the lips are opened to show teeth of dazzling whiteness ;—but fine and delicate, playing over the whole face like a ripple sent up from the depths of the soul within. Who was he ? What does the lamb mean ? How should the legend be interpreted ? We cannot answer these questions. He may have been the court-fool of Ferrara ; and his genius, the spiritual essence of the

man, may have inclined him to laugh at all things. That at least is the value he now has for us. He is the portrait of perpetual irony, the spirit of the golden Sixteenth Century which delicately laughed at the whole world of thoughts and things, the quintessence of the poetry of Ariosto, the wit of Berni, all condensed into one incarnation and immortalised by truthfullest art. With the Gaul, the Spaniard, and the German at her gates, and in her cities, and encamped upon her fields, Italy still laughed ; and when the voice of conscience sounding through Savonarola asked her why, she only smiled—*Sic Genius*.

One evening in May we rowed from Venice to Torcello, and at sunset broke bread and drank wine together among the rank grasses just outside that ancient church. It was pleasant to sit in the so-called chair of Attila and feel the placid stillness of the place. Then there came lounging by a sturdy young fellow in brown country clothes, with a marvellous old wide-awake upon his head, and across his shoulders a bunch of massive church-keys. In strange contrast to his uncouth garb he flirted a pink Japanese fan, gracefully disposing it to cool his sun-burned olive cheeks. This made us look at him. He was not ugly. Nay, there was something of attractive in his face—the smooth-curved chin, the shrewd yet sleepy eyes, and finely-cut thin lips—a curious mixture of audacity and meekness blent upon his features. Yet this impression was but the prelude to his smile. When that first dawned, some breath of humour seeming to stir in him unbidden, the true meaning was given to his face. Each feature helped to make a smile that was the very soul's life of the man expressed. It broadened, showing brilliant teeth, and grew into a noiseless laugh ; and then I saw before me Dosso's jester, the type of Shakspere's fools, the life of that wild irony, now rude, now fine, which once delighted Courts. The laughter of the whole world and of all the centuries was silent in his face. What he said need not be repeated. The charm was less in his words than

in his personality ; for Momus-philosophy lay deep in every look and gesture of the man. The place lent itself to irony : parties of Americans and English parsons, the former agape for any rubbishy old things, the latter learned in the lore of obsolete Church-furniture, had thronged Torcello ; and now they were all gone, and the sun had set behind the Alps, while an irreverent stranger drank his wine in Attila's chair, and nature's jester smiled—*Sic Genius.*

When I slept that night I dreamed of an altarpiece in the Temple of Folly. The goddess sat enthroned beneath a canopy hung with bells and corals. On her lap was a beautiful winged smiling genius, who flourished two bright torches. On her left hand stood the man of Modena with his white lamb, a new S. John. On her right stood the man of Torcello with his keys, a new S. Peter. Both were laughing after their all-absorbent, divine, noiseless fashion ; and under both was written, *Sic Genius.* Are not all things, even profanity, permissible in dreams ?

APPENDIX.

BLANK VERSE.

I.

PREFATORY NOTE.

A SENTENCE in the essay on England's literary debt to Italy (see above, p. 177) furnishes me with a pretext for reprinting two separate studies on Blank Verse.¹ They were composed with a view to illustrating the rhetoric rather than the prosody of this metre, on the conviction that though Blank Verse is an iambic rhythm, it owes its beauty to the liberties taken with the normal structure. The licences allowed themselves in this metre by great masters of versification may be explained, I think, invariably when we note the accent required by the rhetorical significance of their abnormal lines.

It can fairly be argued, however, that with this end in view I have paid too little attention to the prosody of Blank Verse, or, in other words, to its scansion by feet. In order to meet this objection, some prefatory remarks may here be offered upon the difficult question of quantity and accent.

We are accustomed, roughly speaking, to say that ancient metre depends on Quantity and modern metre on Accent. The names Dactyl, Spondee, Trochee, &c., were invented in the analysis of Greek metres to express certain combinations of long and short

¹ I have not attempted to avoid repetitions in this Appendix. Its three parts were written at intervals during the last ten years; and two of them have been separately published. My purpose will be sufficiently served by a simple reprint, and I trust that the reader will not be fatigued by occasional recapitulation of the points I have sought to establish.

syllables, without reference to pitch or emphasis. But when we speak of Quantity in English metre, we mean the more or less accentuation of syllables. Thus an English trochee is a foot in which the first syllable is more accentuated than the second ; an iamb is the contrary. In the transition from the ancient to the modern world the sense of Quantity seems to have been lost, and its values were replaced by Accent. We find, for example, in the watch-song of the Modenese soldiers, which can be referred to a period about the middle of the tenth century, such iambics as the following :—

Divina mundi rex Christe custodia,
Sub tua serva haec castra vigilia.

Both lines have an accentual as well as a quantitative trochee in the fourth place. In the second line the accents on the first syllable of *tua*, and on the second syllable of *vigilia*, which would have been too slight to lengthen them for a classical bar, are allowed to supply the place of quantity.

If Latin verses could thus be written without attention to quantity, this shows that the feeling for it had expired ; and even at a period which may still be called classical, the gradual blunting of the sensibility can be traced in the shortening of vowel sounds. It will suffice to quote the following hexameter :—

Caetera mando focis spernunt quae dentes acuti.

The Pompeian *graffiti* prove abundantly that among the common people at any rate it had never been acute ; and we are led to the conclusion that scansion by quantity in Latin was an artificial refinement, agreeable to highly educated ears. When, therefore, we proceed to state that English lines ignore quantity, we mean that the cultivated feeling for the relative values of long and short syllables has never been sufficiently vivid with us to make us particular about preserving them. We are satisfied with the values afforded by accentuation, though there is no doubt that verses can be written with correct accentuation which shall also preserve quantity in the classic sense. Tennyson's experiments in Alcaics, Hendecasyllabics, and Sapphics suffice for proof. The difference between us and the cultivated ancients in this respect may, in a measure, be due to our comparatively negligent pronunciation. For instance, we do not pronounce the word *mella* as the Italians do, so as to give the full value to both *l*'s. We have not trained

our ear to require, or our vocal organs to make, that delicate differentiation of syllables according to their spelling—in other words, to separate instead of slurring the component parts of speech—on which quantity depends. These considerations lead to a theory of metrical analysis which may be offered with some diffidence.

The laws of metre are to be found in the natural rhythm of words ; for each word in every language has its own rhythmical form. This natural rhythm is expressed in pronunciation, and is determined by the greater or less time consumed in the enunciation of the syllables. Quantity and Accent distinguish two conditions of this expenditure. Quantity, apart from Accent, is the measure of time, lengthened or abbreviated, necessary for the due articulation of the component parts of language. Thus, generally speaking, a long syllable is one in which double vowels or a vowel before accumulated consonants demand a full time for their utterance ; a short syllable is one in which a single vowel or a vowel before a simple consonant may be uttered in a half time. *Me* (double *e*) and *Tunc* are long : *Que* (single *e*) and *Sub* are short. It is agreed, apparently, in European metres to take account only of full and half times ; yet much of the more subtle rhythmical effects depends upon the relative values of syllables which can only be conventionally regarded as not exceeding or falling short of one of the two limitations. Not every long is of exactly equal length. Not every short is of exactly equal brevity. Accent is indifferently used to indicate two separate conditions. It is either the measure of intonation, heightened or lowered, or else it is enforced utterance. Of the former sort of accent, or pitch, which probably played an important part in Greek versification, no account need at present be taken. The latter, or *ictus*, has the effect of quantity, inasmuch as it renders more time needful for the stress laid upon the syllable—the accumulated volume of sound requiring a greater effort of the vocal organs, and consequently a retarded utterance. Every word, then, in articulation is subject to conditions of time, implying what we call Quantity and Accent ; and in many words quantity is hardly distinguishable from accent. Thus, in the line :—

Tityre tu patulae recubans sub tegmine fagi,

the quantity of *Tityre* can be represented either as a double vowel followed by two simple vowels, requiring a time and two half times for enunciation, or else as an ante-penultimate accent. Without

pursuing this analysis into further details, it may be possible to define Quantity as enunciation retarded or accelerated by the greater or less simplicity of the sound to be formed by the vocal organs; Accent as the retardation of a simple sound by the increased effort of the vocal organs needed for marking the ictus. They are both, so to speak, in the category of time; and though it is necessary to distinguish them, it should not be forgotten that their importance in prosody is due to the divisions and subdivisions of time they represent.

The consideration of Pause and Elision will help to illustrate these definitions. When two strong consonants have to be pronounced together, there must always be a pause between them, and with the pause an expenditure of time. That is the secret of the quantity ascribed to the preceding vowel. Thus *amor* in *amor est* has the value of \sim , because no pause is needed, no second consonantal sound being produced after its pronunciation; in *amor dans* it has the value of \sim' , because a fresh consonant has to be formed. The English do not mark this pause clearly. In other words, they do not give full value to each consonant, especially when the same letter is repeated. The Italians do: the first syllable of *mellifluo*, for instance, must be articulated *mel'-lifluo*; and so jealous is the spirit of the language on this point that in words like *accento* the value of the double *cc* is preserved by a *t'-ch* sound. It may be asserted that in proportion as the pronunciation of syllables in a language is more or less perfect, in the same proportion will the sense for quantity be vivid, and quantitative versification be easy.

Elision can be explained on the same principles. Since no fresh effort, no pause, no new expenditure of time is needed when two vowels come together, they are suffered to pass as one. How true a law this is may be perceived when we remember that vulgar persons introduce an *r* between two *a*'s, owing to the difficulty of otherwise articulating them separately. The Lucretian elision of the final *s* in words like *moenibus*, before a consonant, probably shows that this final sibilant was on the point of becoming mute; and the recognised elision of *m* in words like *mecum* before a vowel may in like manner indicate that this liquid had become practically mute, *mecum* tending toward the modern *meco*.

The main drift of the foregoing analysis has been to show that both Quantity and Accent have a common element of Time. It consequently follows that metres which, like the English, prac-

tically ignore quantity, can be scanned in feet, or divided into bars, by accent. Yet the result will never be so accurate as in the case of quantitative rhythms, chiefly because accent itself is variable with us ; and the same combinations of syllables, by a slight shifting of accents, may appear to one observer a dactyl, to another an anapaest, and so forth.

An instance may be furnished by the following line, which is a passable hendecasyllabic Blank Verse :—

She in her hands held forth a cup of water.

If we accentuate the first syllable, the rhythm would most naturally be marked thus :

- ~ ~ | - - | - ~ | - ~ | - ~ |

But this does not yield even a ‘licentiate iambic.’ Therefore, in order to bring it within the rule of the metre, we must shift the accent and scan :—

~ - | ~ - | - - | ~ - | ~ - ~ |

It is of no use to complain that the line is a bad one, and ought to be re-written, because similar lines are of plentiful occurrence in our best dramatic writers. Without such irregularities, Blank Verse would be monotonous.

Licences which would have been intolerable to a Greek ear; such as successive trochees in the third and fourth places, of which there are several specimens in Milton, or a trochee in the second place, which is a favourite expedient of Shelley’s, are far from disagreeable in the English iambic. Indeed, so variable is its structure that it is by no means easy to define the minimum of metrical form below which a Blank Verse ceases to be a recognisable line. It is possible that the diminution of the English iambic by one foot less than the Greek renders its licences more tolerable, and facilitates that interweaving of successive lines by which so many discords are resolved in a controlling harmony. Lastly, it may be observed that, being an accentual metre, blank verse owes much of its rhythmical quality to emphasis. For emphasis is but enforced accent; and when the proper emphasis has been discovered in a line, the problem of its rhythmical structure has almost always been solved. It is thus that close attention to the rhetoric of Blank Verse becomes absolutely necessary.

It will be seen from the foregoing observations that I am neither

for nor against the method of scanning Blank Verse by the traditional feet of Greek and Latin metres. The terms of ancient prosody represent permanent relations between syllables, nor is there anything merely arbitrary in their definitions. Indeed, they must still be used, for want of a more modern system of notation, when the legitimacy of a line has to be tested ; for, after all, the English ‘licentiate iambic’ has a form, although the deflections from that form constitute its beauties. I only contend that it is impossible to apply with rigour rules deduced from the analysis of quantitative metres, to versification based upon accent and emphasis ; and also that when such application has been made, and the scansion has been determined, we have still to seek the æsthetic value of the lines in question. It may of course be answered that the same difficulty meets us in classic poetry—that the finest passages of Æschylus and Virgil do not owe their beauty to their scansion, and that in reading them we habitually ignore it.¹ That is true ; but it is none the less true that they strictly obey the rules of quantitative scansion, whereas it cannot be proved that our Blank Verse is bound by the like limitations. This constitutes a decisive difference ; and the obstinate search for quantitative scansion, even when we have agreed to substitute accents for proper longs and shorts, leads to such misconceptions of the genius of Blank Verse as rendered Johnson’s essay on the versification of Milton ridiculous.

The remarks expressed in the foregoing paragraphs, together with the two following studies on the history and the mechanism of Blank Verse, are not published without misgivings. The whole subject of metre is so complex, so entangled with questions of pronunciation, elocution, musical analogy, and proportional values of concatenated syllables, varying in the case of each language, yet probably capable of being scientifically reduced to simple rules under laws as yet but dimly apprehended, that a prudent critic might well hesitate before exposing his crude speculations to the world.² The conviction that as yet no congruity of doctrine has

¹ The matter is further complicated by the fact that we are quite ignorant how the Greeks read their verse, and that we are not sure about the pronunciation of Latin.

² As instances of these difficulties, I might point out the choice of hendecasyllabic iambic lines by the Italians, and the loose structure of the French Alexandrine, which seems to defy scansion, depending on cæsura, pause, and rhyme.

been arrived at—that we are still forced to adapt the nomenclature of a prosody deduced from the analysis of the most highly perfected Greek metres to rhythmical systems based on different principles—that we have not sufficiently distinguished between the metrical substratum and the æsthetical or rhetorical effect—induces me to court censure, in the hope that further progress may be made in a region where each observer is apt to tax his fellow-workers with a want of intelligence. The best craftsmen work by instinct, and the subtlest *dilettanti* of their masterpieces are contented with sensation. It still remains for the analyst to discover the laws which have regulated the artistic instinct in the production of exquisitely pleasurable combinations.

II.

THE HISTORY OF BLANK VERSE.

ENGLISH blank verse is, perhaps, more various and plastic than any other national metre. It is capable of being used for the most commonplace and the most sublime utterances ; so that, without any alteration in the vehicle, we pass from merely colloquial dialogue to strains of impassioned soliloquy, from comic repartee to tragic eloquence, from terse epigrams to elaborate descriptions. Originally instituted for the drama, it received in Milton's hands an epic treatment, and has by authors of our own day been used for idyllic, and even for lyrical compositions. Yet all of these so widely different applications have only served to develop, without exhausting, its resources. Plato mentions a Greek musical instrument called panharmonion, which was adapted to express the different modes and systems of melodious utterance. This name might be applied to our blank verse ; there is no harmony of sound, no dignity of movement, no swiftness, no subtlety of languid sweetness, no brevity, no force of emphasis beyond its scope. In hearing good blank verse, we do not long for rhyme ; our ears are satisfied without it ; nor does our sense of order and proportion require the obvious and artificial recurrence of stanzas, when the sense creates for itself a melodious structure, and is not forced into the mould of any arbitrary form. So much can hardly be said for any other metre. The Greeks, who were peculiarly sensitive to self-imposed canons of fitness in art, reserved the hexameter for epic and idyllic poetry, the iambic for satire and the drama, the elegiac for inscriptions, epigrams, and minor compositions of a more personal character, and other complex structures for lyrical and choral utterances. To have written an epic or an idyll in iambics would to them have seemed inexcusable. And for this reason, the iambic was limited both in its use and its

development. Two sorts were recognised—the one adapted to the loose and flowing style of comic conversation ; the other to the more ceremonious and measured march of tragic dialogue and description. But when the action of the play became animated, instead of accelerating the iambic rhythm, the poet used trochaic or anapæstic measures, obeying the law of variety by adopting a new mode externally fitted to express the change he had in view.

In the infancy of our drama, rhyme, as the natural accompaniment of mediæval poetry, had universally been used, until the courtiers of Elizabeth bethought them of inventing some more solemn and stately metre in imitation of the classic. It will be remembered that attempts to naturalise Greek and Roman rhythms in our language were then fashionable. Sidney and the *literati* of the *Areopagus* spent their leisure hours in fashioning uncouth hexameters, and Roger Ascham, though he recognised the incapacity of English for scansion, was inclined to welcome an unrhymed metre like the classical iambic. Surrey first solved the problem practically by translating parts of the ‘*Aeneid*’ into verses of ten syllables without rhyme. But his measure has not much variety or ease. It remained for two devoted admirers of classical art, Sackville and Norton, to employ what Surrey called his ‘strange metre’ in the drama. Their ‘*Gorboduc*,’ acted before the Queen in 1561–2, is the first tragedy written in blank verse. The insufferable monotony and dreariness of this play are well known to all students of our early literature. Yet respect for its antiquity induces me to give a specimen of its quaint style. We must remember in reading these lines that they are the embryo of Marlowe’s, Shakspere’s, and Milton’s verse.

O mother, thou to murder thus thy child !
 Even Jove with justice must with lightning flames
 From heaven send down some strange revenge on thee.
 Ah, noble prince, how oft have I beheld
 Thee mounted on thy fierce and trampling steed,
 Shining in armour bright before the tilt,
 And with thy mistress sleeve tied on thy helm,
 And charge thy staff—to please thy lady’s eye—
 That bowed the headpiece of thy friendly foe !

I have purposely chosen the most animated apostrophe in the whole play, in order that its venerable authors might appear to the best advantage. It will be noticed that notwithstanding much

stiffness in the movement of the metre, and some embarrassment in the grammatical construction, we yet may trace variety and emphasis in the pauses of these lines beyond what would at that epoch have been possible in sequences of rhymed couplets. Mr. Collier, in his ‘History of Dramatic Poetry,’ mentions two other plays written in blank verse, but not performed on the public stage, before the appearance of Marlowe’s ‘Tamburlaine.’ It is to this tragedy that he assigns the credit of having once and for all established blank verse as the popular dramatic metre of the English. With this opinion all students who have examined the origin of our theatrical literature will, no doubt, agree. But Marlowe did not merely drive the rhymed couplet from the stage by substituting the blank verse of his contemporaries : he created a new metre by the melody, variety, and force which he infused into the iambic, and left models of versification, the pomp of which Shakspere and Milton alone can be said to have surpassed. The change which he operated was so thorough and so novel to the playwrights as well as the playgoers of his time, that he met with some determined opposition. Thomas Nash spoke scornfully of ‘idiot art masters, that intrude themselves to our ears as the alchemists of eloquence, who (mounted on the stage of eloquence) think to attract better pens with the swelling bombast of bragging blank verse.’ In another sneer he described the new measure as ‘the spacious volubility of a drumming decasyllabon ;’ while Robert Greene, who had written many wearisome rhymed dramas, talked of making ‘verses jet on the stage in tragical buskins, every word filling the ear like the fa-burden of Bow bell, daring God out of heaven with that atheist, Tamburlan, or blaspheming with the mad priest of the Sun.’ But our ‘licentiate iambic’ was destined to triumph. Greene and Nash gave way before inevitable fate, and wrote some better plays in consequence.

Let us inquire what change Marlowe really introduced, and what was his theory of dramatic versification. He found the ten-syllabled heroic line monotonous, monosyllabic, and divided into five feet of tolerably regular alternate short and long. He left it various in form and structure, sometimes redundant by a syllable, sometimes deficient, enriched with unexpected emphases and changes in the beat. He found no sequence or attempt at periods ; one line succeeded another with insipid regularity, and all were made after the same model. He grouped his verse according to

the sense, obeying an internal law of melody, and allowing the thought contained in his words to dominate their form. He did not force his metre to preserve a fixed and unalterable type, but suffered it to assume most variable modulations, the whole beauty of which depended upon their perfect adaptation to the current of his ideas. By these means he was able to produce the double effect of variety and unity, to preserve the fixed march of his chosen metre, and yet, by subtle alterations in the pauses, speed, and grouping of the syllables, to make one measure represent a thousand. Used in this fashion, blank verse became a Proteus. It resembled music, which requires regular time and rhythm ; but, by the employment of phrase, induces a higher kind of melody to rise above the common and despotic beat of time. Bad writers of blank verse, like Marlowe's predecessors, or like those who in all ages have been deficient in plastic energy and power of harmonious modulation, produce successions of monotonous iambic lines, sacrificing the poetry of expression to the mechanism of their art. Metre with them ceases to be the organic body of a vital thought, and becomes a mere framework. And bad critics praise them for the very faults of tameness and monotony which they miscall regularity of numbers. It was thus that the sublimest as well as the most audacious of Milton's essays in versification fell under the censure of Johnson.

It is not difficult to support these eulogies by reference to Marlowe's works ; for some of his finest blank verse passages allow themselves to be detached without any great injury to their integrity. The following may be cited as an instance of his full-voiced harmony. Faustus exclaims—

Have I not made blind Homer sing to me
Of Alexander's love and Cœnon's death ?
And hath not he who built the walls of Troy
With ravishing sound of his melodious harp
Made music with my Mephistophiles ?

We feel at once that a new spirit has been breathed into the metre—a spirit of undefinable melody. Something is owing to the choice of long-resounding and full-vowelled words ; something to the use of monosyllables, as in the third line ; something to alliteration ; but more than all to the passion of the author, and to the ‘plastic stress’ of his creative genius. This tragedy is full of fine passages,

and the soliloquy in which Faustus watches his last moments ebb away, might be quoted as a perfect instance of variety and sustained effect in a situation which could only be redeemed from monotony by consummate art. ‘Edward the Second’ is not less rich in versification. In order to prove that Marlowe could temper his blank verse to different moods and passions, take this speech, in which the indignant Edward first gives way to anger, and then to misery—

Mortimer ! who talks of Mortimer,
 Who wounds me with the name of Mortimer,
 That bloody man ? Good father, on thy lap
 Lay I this head laden with mickle care.
 O, might I never ope these eyes again,
 Never again lift up this drooping head,
 O, never more lift up this dying heart !

The didactic dignity of Marlowe’s verse may be gathered from these lines in ‘Tamburlaine,’—

Our souls whose faculties can comprehend
 The wondrous architecture of the world,
 And measure every wandering planet’s course,
 Still climbing after knowledge infinite,
 And always moving as the restless spheres,
 Will us to wear ourselves, and never rest
 Until we reach the ripest fruit of all,
 That perfect bliss and sole felicity,
 The sweet fruition of an earthly crown.

Again, as if wishing to prove what liberties might be taken with the iambic metre without injury to its music, Marlowe wrote these descriptive lines in the ‘Jew of Malta :’—

Bags of fiery opals, sapphires, amethysts,
 Jacinths, hard topaz, grass-green emeralds,
 Beauteous rubies, sparkling diamonds,
 And sold seen costly stones of so great price,
 As one of them, indifferently rated,
 May serve, in peril of calamity,
 To ransom great kings from captivity.

The licence of the first and third line is both daring and successful. The second departs less from the ordinary rhythm, while the four last carry back the period into the usual flow of Marlowe’s verse.

The four passages which I have quoted are, perhaps, sufficient

to prove that blank verse was not only brought into existence, but also perfected by Marlowe. It is true that, like all great poets, he left his own peculiar imprint on it, and that his metre is marked by an almost extravagant exuberance, impetuosity, and height of colouring. It seems to flow from him with the rapidity of improvisation, and to follow a law of melody rather felt than studied by its author. We feel that the poet loved to give the rein to his ungovernable fancy, forgetting the thought with which he started, revelling in sonorous words, and pouring forth a stream of images, so that the mind receives at last a vague and various impression of sublimity.

Marlowe's contemporaries soon caught the trick of sonorous versification. The obscure author of a play which has sometimes been attributed to Marlowe, wrote these lines in the true style of his master :—

Chime out your softest strains of harmony,
And on delicious music's silken wings
Send ravishing delight to my love's ears.

Peele contented himself with repeating his more honeyed cadences.

Shakspere, next to Marlowe, had more influence than any poet on the formation of our blank verse. Coleridge has maintained that his diction and metre were peculiarly his own, unimitated and inimitable. But I believe that a careful comparison of his style with that of his contemporaries will make it evident that he began a period in which versification was refined and purified from Marlowe's wordiness. Shakspere has more, than Marlowe's versatility and power; but his metre is never so extravagant in its pomp of verbal grandeur. He restrains his own luxuriance, and does not allow himself to be seduced by pleasing sounds. His finest passages owe none of their beauty to alliteration, and yet he knew most exquisitely how to use that meretricious handmaid of melody. Nothing can be more seductive than the charm of repeated liquids and vowels in the following lines :—

On such a night
.Stood Dido with a willow in her hand
Upon the wild sea banks and waft her love
To come again to Carthage.

Nor again did Shakspere employ big sounding words so profusely as Marlowe, but reserved them for effects of especial solemnity, as in the speech of Timon :—

Come not to me again : but say to Athens,
 Timon hath made his everlasting mansion
 Upon the beachèd verge of the salt flood ;
 Whom once a day with his embossèd froth
 The turbulent surge shall cover : thither come,
 And let my gravestone be your oracle.

But Shakspere did not always, or indeed often, employ these somewhat obvious artifices of harmonious diction. The characteristic of his verse is that it is naturally, unobtrusively, and enduringly musical. We hardly know why his words are melodious, or what makes them always fresh, whereas the more apparent charms of Fletcher and of Marlowe pall upon our ears. Throughout his writings there is a subtle adjustment of sound to sense, of lofty thoughts to appropriate words ; the ideas evolve themselves with inexhaustible spontaneity, and a suitable investiture of language is never wanting, so that each cadenced period seems made to hold a thought of its own, and thought is linked to thought and cadence to cadence in unending continuity. Inferior artists have systems of melody, pauses which they repeat, favourite terminations, and accelerations or retardations of the rhythm, which they employ whenever the occasion prompts them. But there is none of this in Shakspere. He never falls into the commonplace of mannerism. Compare Oberon's speeches with Prospero's, or with Lorenzo's, or with Romeo's, or with Mark Antony's ; under the Shaksperian similarity there is a different note in all of these, whereas we know beforehand what form the utterances of Bellario, or Philaster, or Memnon, or Ordella in Fletcher must certainly assume. As a single instance of the elasticity, self-restraint, and freshness of the Shaksperian blank verse ; of its freedom from Marlowe's turgidity, or Fletcher's languor, or Milton's involution ; of its ringing sound and lucid vigour, the following celebrated passage from 'Measure for Measure' may be quoted. It illustrates the freedom from adventitious ornament and the organic continuity of Shakspere's versification, while it also exhibits his power of varying his cadences and suiting them to the dramatic utterance of his characters.

Ay, but to die, and go we know not where ;
 To lie in cold obstruction and to rot ;
 This sensible warm motion to become
 A kneaded clod ; and the delighted spirit

To bathe in fiery floods, or to reside
 In thrilling regions of thick ribbed ice ;
 To be imprisoned in the viewless winds,
 And blown with restless violence about
 The pendent world ; or to be worse than worst
 Of those that lawless and uncertain thoughts
 Imagine howling ;—’tis too horrible !
 The weariest and most loathed worldly life,
 That age, ache, penury, and imprisonment
 Can lay on Nature, is a paradise
 To what we fear of death.

Each of Shakspere's contemporaries and successors among the dramatists commanded a style of his own in blank verse composition. It was so peculiarly the function of the stage and of the playwrights at that particular epoch to perfect this metre, that I do not think some detailed examination of the language of the drama will be out of place. Coleridge observes that ‘Ben Jonson’s blank verse is very masterly and individual.’ To this criticism might be added that it is the blank verse of a scholar—pointed, polished, and free from the lyricisms of his age. It lacks harmony and is often laboured : but vigorous and solid it never fails to be. This panegyric of poetry from the Italianised version of ‘Every Man in his Humour,’ may be taken as a specimen of his most animated style :—

I can repell opinion and approve
 The state of poesy, such as it is,
 Blessed, eternal, and most true divine ;
 Indeed, if you will look on poesy,
 As she appears in many, poor and lame,
 Patched up in remnants and old worn-out rags,
 Half starved for want of her peculiar food,
 Sacred invention ; then I must confess
 Both your conceit and censure of her merit :
 But view her in her glorious ornaments,
 Attired in the majesty of art,
 Set high in spirit with the precious taste
 Of sweet philosophy ; and which is most,
 Crowned with the rich traditions of a soul
 That hates to have her dignity profaned
 With any relish of an earthly thought—
 Oh ! then how proud a presence does she bear !
 Then she is like herself, fit to be seen
 Of none but grave and consecrated eyes.

After a complete perusal of his works I find very little of the fluent grace which belonged in so large a measure to Fletcher and to Shakspere. Yet the first lines of the ‘Sad Shepherd’ have a very delicate music ; they are almost unique in Ben Jonson :—

Here was she wont to go ! and here ! and here !
 Just where these daisies, pinks, and violets grow :
 The world may find the spring by following her ;
 For other print her airy steps ne’er left.
 Her treading would not bend a blade of grass,
 Or shake the downy blue bell from his stalk !
 But like the soft west wind she shot along,
 And where she went, the flowers took thickest root,
 As she had sowed them with her odorous foot.

The melody which gives so chaste and elegant a beauty to these lines is invariable in the verse of Beaumont and Fletcher. We have too much of it there, and surfeit on sweets ; for in a very short time we discover the trick of these great versifiers and learn to expect their luxurious alliterations, and repeated cæsuras at the end of the fifth syllable. Their redundant and deficient lines, the sweetness long drawn out of their delicious cadences, become well known. Then the movement of their verse is not, like that of Shakspere, self-evolved and thoroughly organic ; it obeys a rule ; luxury is sought for its own sake, and languor follows as a direct consequence of certain verbal mannerisms. Among these may be mentioned a decided preference for all words in which there is a predominance of liquids and of vowels. For instance, in this line :—

Showers, hails, snows, frosts, and two-edged winds that prime
 The maiden blossoms,

there is no unlicensed redundancy of syllables ; but the labour of getting through so many accumulated sounds produces a strange retardation of the movement. Another peculiarity is the substitution of hendecasyllabic lines for the usual decasyllable blank verse through long periods of dialogue. In one scene of ‘Valentinian’ there are fifty-five continuous lines, of which only five are decasyllabic verses, the rest being hendecasyllables ; so that the licence of the superfluous syllable, which is always granted in dramatic writing for the sake of variety, becomes, in its turn, far more cloying than a strict adherence to the five-footed verse. It is also

noticeable that this weak ending is frequently constructed by the addition of some emphatic monosyllable. Thus :—

I do remember him; he was my guardian,
Appointed by the senate to preserve me :
What a full majesty sits in his face yet.

Or :—

The desolations that this great eclipse works.

The natural consequence of these delays and languors in the rhythm is that the versification of Beaumont and Fletcher has always a meandering and rotary movement. It does not seem to leap or glide straight onward, but to return upon itself and wind and double. The following passage may be quoted as illustrative of its almost lyrical voluptuousness :—

I do her wrong, much wrong: she's young and blessed,
Fair as the spring, and as his blossoms tender;
But I a nipping North-wind, my head hung
With hails and frosty icicles: are the souls so too
When they depart hence, lame and old and loveless?
Ah, no! 'tis ever youth there: Age and Death
Follow our flesh no more, and that forced opinion
That spirits have no sexes, I believe not.

The speech of Aspatia among her maidens is an excellent example of the more careful verse of Fletcher :—

Fie, you have missed it here, Antiphila,
You are much mistaken, wench;
These colours are not dull and pale enough,
To shew a soul so full of misery
As this sad lady's was; do it by me,
Do it again by me the lost Aspatia,
And you shall find all true but the wild island.
I stand upon the sea beach now, and think
Mine arms thus, and mine hair blown with the wind,
Wild as that desert, and let all about me
Tell that I am forsaken; do my face
(If thou hadst ever feeling of a sorrow,)
Thus, thus, Antiphila, strive to make me look
Like Sorrow's monument; and the trees about me,
Let them be dry and leafless; let the rocks
Groan with continual surges, and behind me
Make all a desolation; look, look, wenches,
A miserable life of this poor picture!

There is enough variety and subtle melody in this without the usual effeminacy of Fletcher's style. What makes it most effective is that it is written so as to represent the natural inflections of tone, the pauses, and the emphases of the character who speaks it. One more specimen of this most musical of poets may be allowed me. It is from 'Thierry and Theodoret.' Thierry speaks and Ordella answers :—

Th. 'Tis full of fearful shadows.

Ord. So is sleep, sir,

Or any thing that's merely ours and mortal ;
We were begotten gods else : but these fears,
Feeling but once the fires of noble thoughts,
Fly, like the shapes of clouds we form, to nothing.

Th. Suppose it death.

Ord. I do.

Th. And endless parting

With all we can call ours, with all our sweetness,
With youth, strength, pleasure, people, time, nay reason.
For in the silent grave no conversation,
No joyful tread of friends, no voice of lovers,
No careful father's counsel ; nothing's heard,
Nor nothing is, but all oblivion,
Dust, and an endless darkness, and dare you, woman,
Desire this place ?

Ord. 'Tis of all sleeps the sweetest ;

Children begin it to us, strong men seek it,
And kings from height of all their painted glories
Fall like spent exhalations to this centre.

There the poet should have stopped, for exquisite thoughts have hitherto been rendered in exquisite language. He continues, however, for five lines of inferior beauty.

Turning from the more celebrated to the less distinguished playwrights, we find almost universally the power of writing forcible blank verse. Marston condensed much thought into his lines, and made such epigrams as these :—

Can man by no means creep out of himself
And leave the slough of viperous grief behind ?

or such addresses of concentrated passion as this prologue—

Therefore we proclaim
If any spirit breathes within this round,

Uncapable of weighty passion
 (As from his birth being hugged in the arms
 And nuzzled 'twixt the breasts of Happiness),
 Who winks and shuts his apprehension up
 From common sense of what men were, and are ;
 Who would not know what men must be : let such
 Hurry amain from our black-visaged shows ;
 We shall afront their eyes. But if a breast,
 Nailed to the earth with grief, if any heart,
 Pierced through with anguish, pant within this ring ;
 If there be any blood whose heat is choked
 And stifled with true sense of misery—
 If aught of these strains fill this consort up—
 They do arrive most welcome.

We find both quaintness of language and roughness of rhythm in these lines ; but how weighty, how eloquently solemn, is the apostrophe to those of the spectators whose own sorrows render them participant of tragic woes. It is clear that a large and broad *style*, a sense of rhythm, and a freedom in the use of blank verse as a natural vehicle of thought, were epidemic in that age.

Facility for expressing every shade of sentiment or reflection in clear and simple lines belonged peculiarly to Decker, Heywood, Middleton, and Rowley, poets who made but little pretension to melodious charms and flowers of fancy, but whose native ear maintained such flowing periods as the following :—

- D.* Thy voice sends forth such music, that I never
 Was ravished with a more celestial sound.
 Were every servant in the world like thee,
 So full of goodness, angels would come down
 To dwell with us. Thy name is Angelo,
 And like that name thou art. Get thee to rest ;
 Thy youth with too much watching is oppressed.
- A.* No, my dear lady. I could weary stars,
 And force the wakeful moon to lose her eyes,
 By my late watching ; but to wait on you,
 When at your prayers you kneel before the altar,
 Methinks I'm singing with some choir in heaven,
 So blest I hold me in your company.
 Therefore, my most loved mistress, do not bid
 Your boy, so serviceable, to get hence ;
 For then you break his heart.

The same praise belongs to Massinger, who was, indeed, associated with Decker in the production of the play from which these lines are quoted. Coleridge remarks that he has reconciled the language of everyday life with poetical diction more thoroughly than any other writer of dramatic blank verse, and for this reason he recommends him as a better model for young writers than Shakspere, who is far too individual, and Fletcher, who is too monotonously lyrical.

If it is the case with all our dramatists that the melody of their versification depends entirely upon the sense of their words, this is particularly true of Massinger. It will be noticed that all the changes in his rhythm are accounted for by changes in the thought, or answer to supposed alterations of the actor's gestures and of his voice. In lighter moods, Massinger could use hendecasyllabic periods with much of Fletcher's melody. This is a specimen:—

Not far from where my father lives, a lady,
A neighbour by, blest with as great a beauty
As nature durst bestow without undoing,
Dwelt, and most happily, as I thought then,
And blessed the house a thousand times she dwelt in.
This beauty, in the blossom of my youth,
When my first fire knew no adulterate incense,
Nor I no way to flatter but my fondness,
In all the bravery my friends could show me,
In all the faith my innocence could give me,
In the best language my true tongue could tell me,
And all the broken sighs my sick heart lent me,
I sued and served. Long did I love this lady,
Long was my travail, long my trade, to win her ;
With all the duty of my soul I served her.

There is no need to call attention to the alliterative structures of this period. They are strongly marked. Massinger represents a whole class of the later Elizabethan playwrights, who used a flowing blank verse, perfected by long practice for the purpose of the stage. Shirley was one of this set; he wrote evenly and with due attention to the meaning of his words. But there were other ambitious versifiers, like Ford, who sought for more recondite and elaborate graces. It has been thought that Ford imitated Shakspere in his style as much as in the situations of his dramas. I cannot myself perceive much trace of Shakspere in the verse of

Ford ; but these two specimens will enable the reader to judge fairly of his rhetoric :—

Hie to thy father's house, there lock thee fast
 Alone within thy chamber ; then fall down
 On both thy knees, and grovel on the ground ;
 Cry to thy heart, wash every word thou utterest
 In tears, and (if 't be possible) of blood :
 Beg heaven to cleanse the leprosy of lust
 That rots thy soul ; acknowledge what thou art,
 A wretch, a worm, a nothing : weep, sigh, pray
 Three times a day, and three times every night ;
 For seven days' space do this ; then, if thou findest
 No change in thy desires, return to me,
 I'll think on remedy. Pray for thyself
 At home, whilst I pray for thee here ; away—
 My blessing with thee—we have need to pray.

The lines are much more broken up than is usual with our dramatists. They sparkle with short sentences and quick successions of reiterated sounds. The same effect is noticeable in Calantha's dying speech, where the situation is quite different :—

Forgive me. Now I turn to thee, thou shadow
 Of my contracted lord : bear witness all,
 I put my mother's wedding-ring upon
 His finger ; 'twas my father's last bequest :
 Thus I now marry him whose wife I am !
 Death shall not separate us. O, my lords,
 I but deceived your eyes with antick gesture,
 When one news straight came huddling on another,
 Of death, and death, and death ; still I danced forward.
 But it struck home, and here, and in an instant.
 Be such mere women, who with shrieks and outcries,
 Can vow a present end to all their sorrows ;
 Yet live to vow new pleasures, and outlive them.
 They are the silent griefs which cut the heart strings ;
 Let me die smiling.

This is a sculptured and incisive style. Even the largo (to borrow a term from music) of Calantha's address to her nobles, though it assumes hendecasyllabic stateliness, maintains the crisp and pointed motion of the lines that had preceded it. While speaking of Ben Jonson or of Marston would have been the proper time to mention the blank verse of George Chapman, a very

manly and scholarlike author. He expressed philosophical ideas in elevated language. This eulogy of honourable love is vigorous in thought as well as metre :—

'Tis nature's second sun,
Causing a spring of virtues where he shines ;
And as without the sun, the world's great eye,
All colours, beauties, both of art and nature,
Are given in vain to man ; so without love
All beauties bred in women are in vain,
All virtues born in men lie buried ;
For love informs them as the sun doth colours ;
And as the sun, reflecting his warm beams
Against the earth, begets all fruits and flowers,
So love, fair shining in the inward man,
Brings forth in him the honourable fruits
Of valour, wit, virtue, and haughty thoughts,
Brave resolution, and divine discourse.

There is nothing in this passage which can be termed highly poetical. It is chiefly interesting as showing the plasticity of language and of metre in the hands of our Elizabethan authors. They fixed their mind upon their thoughts, as we should do in writing prose, and turned out terse and pregnant lines not unadorned with melody.

I have hitherto purposely abstained from speaking about Webster, a poet of no ordinary power, whose treatment of blank verse is specially illustrative of all the licences which were permitted by the playwrights of that time. His language is remarkably condensed, elliptical, and even crabbed. His verse is broken up into strange blocks and masses, often reading like rhythmical prose. It is hard, for instance, to make a five-footed line out of the following :—

To be executed again ; who must despatch me ?

Yet close analysis will always prove that there was method in the aberrations of Webster, and that he used his metre as the most delicate and responsive instrument for all varieties of dramatic expression. Avoiding the sing-song of Greene and Peele, the lyrical sweetness of Fletcher, the prosaic gravity of Jonson, the limpid fluency of Heywood and Decker, the tumid magniloquence of Marlowe, and the glittering regularity of Ford, he perfected a style which depends for its effect upon the emphases and pauses of the reciter. One of the most striking lines in his tragedy of the

'Duchess of Malfi' proves how boldly and how successfully Webster sacrificed metre to expression. A brother is looking for the first time after death on the form of a sister whom he has caused to be murdered :—

Cover her face : mine eyes dazzle : she died young.

There is no cæsura, no regular flow of verse, in this line, though in point of syllables it is not more redundant than half of Fletcher's. Each sentence has to be said separately, with long intervals and sighs, that indicate the working of remorseful thought. The powerful collocation of his words may be illustrated by such a line as—

Other sins only speak ; murder shrieks out !

where the logical meaning can hardly fail to be emphasized by the reader. Scansion in the verse of Webster is subordinate to the purpose of the speaker : in writing it he no doubt imagined his actors declaiming with great variety of intonation, with frequent and lengthy pauses, and with considerable differences in the rapidity of their utterances. The dialogue of the duchess with her waiting-maid on the subject of the other world and death is among the finest for its thoughts and language. As far as rhythm contributes to its excellences, they depend entirely upon the pauses, emphases, and irregularities of all sorts which are used. The duchess begins :—

O, that it were possible we might
But hold some two days' conference with the dead.
From them I should learn somewhat, I am sure,
I never shall know here.

Up to this point the verses have run smoothly for Webster. But the duchess has exhausted one vein of meditation. Her voice sinks, and she falls into a profound reverie. When she rouses herself again to address Cariola, she starts with a new thought, and the line is made redundant :—

I'll tell thee a miracle ;
I am not mad yet to my cause of sorrow :
The heaven o'er my head seems made of molten brass,
The earth of flaming sulphur ; yet I am not mad.

To eke out the second line the voice is made to dwell with emphasis upon the word 'mad,' while the third and fourth have each twelve

syllables, which must be pronounced with desperate energy and distinctness—as it were rapidly beneath the breath. But again her passion changes. It relents, and becomes more tender. And for a space we have verses that flow more evenly :—

I am acquainted with sad misery ;
 As the tanned galley-slave is with his oar ;
 Necessity makes me suffer constantly,
 And custom makes it easy.

At this point she sinks into meditation, and on rousing herself again with a fresh thought, the verse is broken and redundant :—

What do I look like now ?

Cariola answers plainly, and her lines have a smooth rhythm :—

Like to your picture in the gallery,
 A deal of life in show, but none in practice ;
 Or rather like some reverend monument,
 Whose ruins are even pitied.

The duchess takes up this thought :—

Very proper ;
 And fortune seems only to have her eyesight
 To behold my tragedy.

Here her contemplation is broken by the approach of a messenger, and she exclaims, without completing the line :—

How now !
 What noise is that ?

It might seem almost hypercritical to remark, that when the train of thought is broken from without, the verse is deficient ; when broken by the natural course of the speaker's reflection, it is redundant. Yet this may be observed in the instances which I have quoted, and there is a real reason for it. The redundant line indicates the incubation of long-continued reverie ; the deficient very well expresses that short and sudden cessation of thought which is produced by an interruption from without. The remarks which I have made on Webster's style apply with almost equal force to that of his contemporaries. We read in 'Hamlet,' for instance :—

This bodily creation ecstasy
Is very cunning in.
Ecstasy !

The second line is defective in one syllable. That syllable, to Shakspere's delicate sense of the value of sounds and pauses, was supplied by Hamlet's manner. The prince was meant, no doubt, to startle his audience by the sudden repetition of the word 'ecstasy,' after a quick gesture of astonishment.

To those who read the pages of our dramatists with this conception of their metre, its irregularities furnish an unerring index to the inflections which the actors must have used, to the characters which the poets designed, and to the situations which they calculated. The want of action is thus in some measure compensated, and it becomes apparent that the true secret of blank verse consists in the proper adaptation of words and rhythms to the sense contained in them. On this point I have already more than once insisted. I repeat it because it seems to me that blank verse cannot be properly appreciated, far less properly written, unless it be remembered that thought must always run before expression, and mould language to its own particular uses. Blank verse is indeed a sort of divinised prose. Unlimited by rhyme or stanza, it has the freedom of *oratio soluta* subject to severe laws of rhythm. In the cunning use of this liberty, in the continual creation of melodious form adapted to the ever-varying subtleties of thought and feeling, lies the secret of the versifier's art.

Having traced the origin and development of blank verse upon the stage, and seen the congruence of liberty and law, the harmony of thought and form, which constitute its beauty, we can understand how Milton came to use it as he did. Milton was deeply read in the Elizabethan authors ; he profited by all of them and wore their mantle with a double portion of their power. Nor did he fail to feel the necessity of raising this metre, without altering its essential nature, to the epical dignity of the Virgilian hexameter ; so that he added structures of more complex melody than had been used upon the stage, periods more fitted to reading or to recitation than to the rapid utterance of acted character. Yet, while he dignified the metre by epical additions, he never forgot that he was handling the verse of tragedy ; and every one of the 'remarkably unharmonious' lines which Johnson has collected in his essay on the versification of Milton, was not fashioned, as the

critic hints, in slovenly haste, or in despair of making modern language musical, but was deliberately written in obedience to the highest laws of the metre which Marlowe, Shakspere, Fletcher, Webster, and the other dramatists had used. In suiting blank verse to epic poetry, Milton preserved the elasticity and force with which his predecessors had wielded it ; his so-called harshness resulted from a deliberate or instinctive obedience to the genius of the English tragic metre. It seems hardly necessary to insist upon this view of Milton's versification. Yet the pernicious canons of the eighteenth century, when taste had become habituated to the mechanical regularity and meaningless monotony of the couplet, still prevail, and there are people who cannot read Milton by the sense and by their ear, but who cling blindly to the laws of rigorous scansion. A dispute arose some time ago in one of our leading papers, as to the proper reading of two lines in 'Samson Agonistes' ; where, by the way, dramatic licence was, to say the least, allowable. The lines run thus :—

Yet God hath wrought things as incredible
For his people of old : what hinders now ?

It was suggested that they might be reduced to order by this transposition :—

Yet God of old hath for his people wrought
Things as incredible : what hinders now ?

It is clear that the versification according to the second reading is far smoother. But is it more Miltonic, and would it not be very easy by a similar process of transposition to emasculate some of the most vigorous periods in Milton's poetry, and to reduce his music to the five-footed monotony of incompetent versifiers ? The truth is, that the chorus—or Milton, who speaks in the chorus—does not think about iambic regularity, but is intent on arguing with Manoah. Its words of faith and confidence rush forth :—

Yet God hath wrought things as incredible
For his people of old —

then stop ; and the question follows after a pause :—

What hinders now ?

Energy of meaning is thus communicated to the double purpose of their argument. The action of the speech is weakened by the

suggested emendation. Take again line 175 of ‘Samson Agonistes’—

Universally crowned with highest praises,
and write it—

Crowned universally with highest praises.

The first form is anomalous ; the second makes a very decent hendecasyllabic. Johnson, Bentley, and the like, would rejoice in so manipulating a hundred characteristic passages ; but true criticism looks backward and deduces its grounds of judgment from the predecessors rather than the successors of a poet. Adopting this standard, we should try Milton by Elizabethan models and not by the versifiers of the eighteenth century.

But these examples are taken from a tragedy. In ‘Paradise Lost’ we find that Milton has varied the dramatic rhythm by a very sparing use of hendecasyllable lines and by introducing far more involved and artificial cadences. In fact the flow of epical language is naturally more sedate and complex than that of the drama : for it has to follow the thoughts of one mind through all its reasonings. Yet the dramatic genius of the metre is for ever asserting itself, as in the following lines :—

Rejoicing but with awe,
In adoration at his feet I fell
Submiss ; he reared me, and, ‘Whom thou soughtest I am,’
Said mildly, ‘Author of all this thou seest
Above, or round about thee, or beneath.’

Here if we fix our attention upon the lines and try to scan them, we find the third most dissonant. But if we read them by the sense, and follow the grouping of the thoughts, we terminate one cadence at ‘submiss,’ and after a moment of parenthetical description begin another period, which extends itself through the concluding lines. To analyse Miltonic blank verse in all its details would be the work of much study and prolonged labour. It is enough to indicate the fact that the most sonorous passages begin and end with interrupted lines, including in one organic structure, periods, parentheses, and paragraphs of fluent melody, that the harmonies are wrought by subtle and most complex alliterative systems, by delicate changes in the length and volume of syllables, and by the choice of names magnificent for their mere gorgeousness of sound. In these structures there are many pauses

which enable the ear and voice to rest themselves, but none are perfect, none satisfy the want created by the opening hemistich, until the final and deliberate close is reached. Then the sense of harmony is gratified and we proceed with pleasure to a new and different sequence. If the truth of this remark is not confirmed by the following celebrated and essentially Miltonic passage, it must fall without further justification :—

And now his heart
 Distends with pride, and hardening in his strength,
 Glories ; for never since created man
 Met such embodied force as named with these
 Could merit more than that small infantry
 Warred on by cranes : though all the giant brood
 Of Phlegra, with the heroic race were joined
 That fought at Thebes or Ilium, on each side
 Mixed with auxiliar Gods ; and what resounds
 In fable or romance of Uther's son,
 Begirt with English and Armoric knights ;
 And all who since, baptized or infidel,
 Jousted in Aspramont or Montalban,
 Damasco or Morocco or Trebizond,
 Or whom Biserta sent from Afric shore,
 When Charlemagne with all his peerage fell
 By Fontarabbia.

After perusing this quotation, let the reader compare it with Claudio's speech on Death in 'Measure for Measure,' and observe the difference between Shaksperian and Miltonic, between dramatic and epical blank verse. The one is simple in construction and progressive, the other is complex and stationary ; but both are musical beyond the possibility of imitation. The one exhibits a thought, in the process of formation, developing itself from the excited fancy of the speaker. The other presents to us an image crystallised and perfect in the poet's mind ; the one is in time, the other in space—the one is a growing and the other a complete organism. The whole difference between the drama and the epic is implicit in these periods. The one, if we may play upon a fancy, resembles Music, and the other Architecture.

In this again we find a proof that the structure of blank verse depends upon the nature of the thought which it is meant to clothe. The thoughts of a dramatist—whether his characters converse or soliloquise—are, of necessity, in evolution; the thoughts of an

epical poet are before him, as matter which he must give form to. The richness and melody and variety of his versification will, in either case, depend upon the copiousness of his language, the delicacy of his ear, and the fertility of his invention. We owe everything to the nature of the poet, and very little to the deca-syllables which he is using.

Milton was the last of the Elizabethans. With him the spirit of our literary renaissance became for the time extinct. Even during his lifetime the taste and capacity for blank verse composition had expired. It is said that Dryden wished to put ‘Paradise Lost’ into couplets, and received from Milton the indifferent answer, ‘Let the young man tag his rhymes.’ Dryden, in his essay on dramatic poetry, defended the use of rhyme, and introduced the habit of writing plays in heroics, to the detriment of sense and character and freedom. Yet there are passages in his later tragedies —‘All for Love,’ ‘Cleopatra,’ ‘King Arthur,’ and ‘The Spanish Friar’—which show that he could use the tragic metre of blank verse with moderate ability. The Elizabethan inspiration still feebly survives in lines like these :—

The gods are just,
But how can finite measure infinite ?
Reason, alas ! it does not know itself !
Yet man, vain man, will, with this short-lined plummet,
Fathom the vast abyss of heavenly justice.
Whatever is, is in its causes just,
Since all things are by fate. But purblind man
Sees but a part of the chain, the nearest links ;
His eyes not carrying to that equal beam
That poises all above.

This is average thought expressed in average words. But ‘Absalom and Achitophel’ is a work of the very highest genius in its kind, written not under the influence and inspiration of another age, but produced as the expression of a different and no less genuine phase of national development. During the period of Dryden’s ascendancy over English literature, very little blank verse was written of much moment. Yet, it must be remembered that the passage of the ‘Mourning Bride,’ which Johnson preferred to any single piece of English descriptive poetry, first saw the light in 1697. The lines begin—‘How reverend is the face of this tall pile.’ They are dignified, melodious, and clear ; but we already trace in

the handling of the language more of the effort after neatness and precision, and less of nature, than was common with the elder dramatists. After the death of Otway and Congreve, blank verse held the stage in the miserable compositions of the eighteenth century; but it had no true vitality. The real works of genius in that period were written in couplets, and it was not until the first dawn of a second renaissance in England, that blank verse began again to be practised. Meanwhile the use of the couplet had unfitted poets for its composition. Their acquired canons of regularity, when applied to that loose and flowing metre, led them astray. They no longer trusted exclusively to their ear, but to a mechanism which rendered accuracy of ear almost useless, not to say impossible. Hence it followed, that when blank verse began again to be written, it found itself very much at the point where it had stood before the appearance of Marlowe. Even Thomson, who succeeded so well in imitating Spenserian stanza, wrote stiff and languid blank verse with monosyllabic terminations and monotonous cadences—a pedestrian style.

Cowper, in his translation of Homer, aimed at the Miltonic structure, and acquired a solemn though cumbrous versification. The description of the Russian empress's ice-palace, in 'The Winter Morning Walk,' proves how he had imbued himself with the language of the 'Paradise Lost,' and how naturally he adapted it to his own thoughts. Coleridge's blank verse has a kind of inflated grandeur, but not much of Elizabethan variety of music, subtlety of texture, and lightness of movement. His lines written in the Valley of Chamouni are sonorous; but they want elasticity, and are inferior in quality to his lyrics. Heaviness of style and turgid rhetoric deface his verse and prose alike. Wordsworth again could not handle blank verse with any certainty of success. Wildernesses of the 'Excursion' extend for pages and pages barren of beauty. We plod over them on foot, sinking knee-deep into the clinging sand; whereas the true master of blank verse carries us aloft as on a winged steed through cloud and sunshine in a yielding air. Wordsworth mistook the language of prose for that of Nature, and did not understand that natural verse might be written without the tedious heaviness of common disquisitions. One of his highest efforts is the poem on the Simplon Pass, introduced into the 'Prelude.' This owes its great beauty to the perfect delineation which he has succeeded in producing by suggestive

images, by reiterated cadences, by solitary lines, by breathless repetitions, by the perfect union, in short, which subsists between the poet's mind and the nature he is representing.

Byron again is uncertain in his blank verse. The lines on the Coliseum in 'Manfred' are as good as a genuine Elizabethan passage, because they are spoken from the fulness of a poet's heart, and with a continuity of thought and copiousness of language which insured their organic vitality. But they are exceptional. Byron needed rhyme as an assistance to his defective melody. He did not feel that inner music which is the soul of true blank verse and sounding prose. In Keats at last we reach this power. His 'Hyperion' is sung, not written, governed in all its parts by the controlling force of imagined melody. Its music is fluid, bound by no external measurement of feet, but determined by the sense and intonation of the poet's thought, while like the crotalos of the Athenian flute-player, the decasyllabic beat maintains an uninterrupted under-current of regular pulsations. Keats studied Milton and strove to imitate him. But he falls below the majesty and breadth of Milton's manner. He is too luxuriant in words and images, too loose in rhythm and prone to description. In fact, he produces an Elizabethan poem of even more wanton superfluity than those which he imitates. The entrance of Phœbus into his desecrated palace is a brilliant instance of the plasticity of language in a master's hand. But there is something florid in it which smacks of a degenerating taste in art. Some of Shelley's blank verse is perhaps the best which this century has produced, though it is too hasty and incoherent, especially in 'Prometheus Unbound,' to attain the equality of sustained style. In 'Alastor' he shows what he can do both without imitation and by its help. The lines on Egypt are written with a true Miltonic roll and ponderous grandiloquence of aggregated names. But in the last paragraph of the poem we find the vernal freshness, elasticity, and delicacy that are Shelley's own. It is noticeable that both Keats and Shelley make an Elizabethan use of the so-called heroic couplet. 'Epipsychidion' and 'Lamia' are written, not in the metre of Dryden, Churchill, Pope, and Crabbe, but in that of Marlowe and Fletcher. Nothing proves more significantly the distance between the Elizabethan spirit and the taste of the eighteenth century, than the dissimilarity of these two metres, syllabically, and in point of rhyme identical. The couplets of Marlowe, Fletcher, Shelley, and Keats, follow the laws

of blank verse, and add rhyme ;—that is to say, their periods and pauses are entirely determined by the sense. The couplets of Dryden and his followers resemble Ovid's elegiacs in the permanence of their form and the restriction of their thought. Mr. Browning, who is one of the latest and most characteristic products of the Elizabethan revival, has made good use of this loose rhyming metre in ‘Sordello.’ Among the most melodious passages of that poem may be found the following :—

You can believe
 Sordello foremost in the regal class
 Nature has broadly severed from the mass
 Of men, and framed for pleasure, as she frames
 Some happy lands that have luxurious names
 For loose fertility; a foot-fall there
 Suffices to upturn to the warm air
 Half germinating spices, mere decay
 Produces richer life, and day by day
 New pollen on the lily petal grows,
 And still more labyrinthine buds the rose.

The whole structure of this period, in its pauses and studied disregard of the rhymed system, is that of blank verse. The final couplet completes the sense and satisfies the ear with regularity. Browning by fits and starts produces passages of fine blank verse, blowing out bubbles of magnificent sound as glass is blown from red-hot matter by the fierce breath and fiery will. Swinburne, when he chooses, sweeps the long purple, blows the golden trumpet, and intones the sacrificial chaunt of the Elizabethan hierarchy. He is a supreme artist in words ; they obey him as the keys obey an organist, and from their combination he builds up melodious palaces of resonant magnificence. Tennyson must be named the most original and greatest living writer of blank verse. The classical beauty of the ‘Idylls of the King,’ the luxuriant eloquence of the ‘Princess,’ the calm majesty of ‘Ulysses,’ the idyllic sweetness of ‘CEnone,’ the grandeur of the ‘Mort d’Arthur,’ are monuments to the variety and scientific grasp of his genius. Subtle melody and self-restrained splendour are observable throughout his compositions. He has the power of selection and of criticism, the lack of which makes blank verse tumid or prosaic. It may be noticed that Tennyson has not only created for himself a style in narrative and descriptive blank verse, but that he has also adapted this

Protean metre to lyrical purposes. Three songs in the 'Princess,' 'Tears, idle tears,' 'Now sleeps the crimson petal,' and 'Come down, O maid,' are perfect specimens of most melodious and complete minstrelsy in words. We observe that the first of these songs is divided into periods of five lines, each of which terminates with the words 'days that are no more.' This recurrence of sound and meaning is a substitute for rhyme, and suggests rhyme so persuasively that it is impossible to call the poem mere blank verse. The second song is less simple in its construction : it consists of a quatrain followed by three couplets, and succeeded by a final quatrain, each group of lines ending with the word 'me.' The lines are so managed, by recurrences of sound and by the restriction of the sense to separate lines, that the form of lyric verse is again imitated without aid of rhyme. Theocritus, in his Amœbean Idylls, had suggested this system ; and Shakspere, in the 'Merchant of Venice' (act v. sc. 1), had shown what could be made of it in English. But the third song which I have mentioned depends for its effect upon no artificial structure, no reiterated sounds. The poet calls it an idyll : I think it may be referred to as a most convincing proof that the English language can be made perfectly lyrical and musical without the need of stanzas or of rhyme.

I have now passed in brief review the greatest writers of blank verse, and have tried to show that this metre, originally formed for dramatic elocution, became epical, idyllic, lyrical, didactic, according to the will of the poets who made use of it. In conclusion, I may repeat some of the points which are established with reference to the scope and purpose of the metre. It seems adapted specially for thought in evolution ; it requires progression and sustained effort. As a consequence of this, its melody is determined by the sense which it contains, and depends more upon proportion and harmony of sounds, than upon recurrences and regularities of structure. This being its essential character, it follows that blank verse is better suited for dialogues, descriptions, eloquent appeals, rhetorical declamations, for all those forms of poetry which imply a continuity and development of thought, than for the setting forth of some one perfect and full-formed idea. The thought or 'moment' which is sufficient for a sonnet would seem poor and fragmentary in fourteen lines of blank verse, unless they were distinctly understood to form a part of some continuous poem or dramatic dialogue. When, therefore, blank verse is used lyrically, the poet who mani-

pulates it has to deceive the ear by structures analogous to those of rhymed stanzas. The harmony of our language is such as to admit of exquisite finish in this style; but blank verse sacrifices a portion of its characteristic freedom, and assimilates itself to another type of metrical expression, in the process. Another point about blank verse is that it admits of no mediocrity; it must be either clay or gold. Its writer gains no unreal advantage from the form of his versification, but has to produce fine thoughts in vigorous and musical language. Hence, we find that blank verse has been the metre of genius, that it is only used successfully by indubitable poets, and that it is no favourite in a mean, contracted and unimaginative age. The freedom of the renaissance created it in England. The freedom of our own century has reproduced it. Blank verse is a type and symbol of our national literary spirit—uncontrolled by precedent or rule, inclined to extravagance, yet reaching perfection at intervals by an inner force and *vivida vis* of native inspiration.

III.

THE BLANK VERSE OF MILTON.

AMONG the many points which connect the literature of this century with that of the Elizabethan age, there is none more marked and striking than the revival of a true feeling for the beauty of blank verse. Blank verse was the creation of our dramatists, from Marlowe to Massinger and Shirley. Milton received it at their hands ; but, in appropriating this metre to the Epic, even Milton thought it necessary to defend the use of unrhymed verse. Milton belonged by education and by disposition to the age which for want of a more accurate title has been called Elizabethan, but which may better be described as the Renaissance in England. That is to say, the spirit which gave form and life to our literature during the sixteenth and the first half of the seventeenth centuries, preserved its fullest vigour and manifested itself with the utmost splendour in the genius of Milton. But while he was yet alive, and by the publication of his masterpiece was proving his legitimate descent from the lineage of Spenser, Bacon, and Shakspere, a new and antagonistic spirit began to manifest itself. The poets and prose-writers of the Restoration stood no longer in a close relation to Italy and the classics, nor did they continue the tradition of the dramatists of our renaissance. They followed French examples, and introduced another standard of taste. One of the signs of this change was their rejection of blank verse, their exclusive practice of the couplet. To some extent this was a return to old English precedents, to the rhyming metre of Chaucer and the earliest English plays. But the heroic verse, as developed by Dryden, was not a regular continuation of the tradition handed down from Chaucer and from Marlowe. It had less in common with the metre of the 'Canterbury Tales' and 'Hero and Leander' than with the

French Alexandrine, and its adoption was one of the signs of the French influence which prevailed throughout the Restoration, and which determined the style of English literature for the following century.

The exchange of blank verse for the rhyming couplet was not so insignificant as at first sight it may appear. It was no mere whim of fashion or voluntary preference among the poets for one of two metres, either of which they could have used with equal mastery. On the contrary, it indicated a radical change in the spirit of our literature. With the substitution of heroic for unrhymed verse, the theory and practice of harmony in English composition were altered. What was essentially national in our poetry—the music of sustained periods, elastic in their structure, and governed by the subtlest laws of melody in recurring consonants and vowels—was sacrificed for the artificial elegance and monotonous cadence of the couplet. For a century and a half the summit of all excellence in versification was the construction of neat pairs of lines, smooth indeed and polished, but scarcely varying in their form. The breadth and freedom of style, the organic connection between thought and rhythm, were abandoned for precise and studied regularity : and corresponding to this restriction of the form of poetry was an impoverishment in its matter both of thought and fancy. The audacities of Shakspere and the sublimities of Milton were no less unknown and unappreciated than the volume and the grandeur of their metrical effects. We might compare this change in the spirit of our literature to the extinction of all the architectural originality of the earlier Italian Renaissance in the formal elegance of the Palladian style. Of course it is not to be denied that much was gained as well as lost. Not to speak of the exaggerated conceits, fantastic phraseology, and faults of overstrained imagination, which were eliminated in the age of the Restoration and Queen Anne, it must always be remembered that few literatures can exhibit two types of excellence so great and yet so diverse as those of our Elizabethan and Classic periods. But the fact remains that during this century and a half our authors abandoned the fields in which the earlie ; and most splendid laurels of the English had been won, and our critics lost the sense for beauties of style peculiarly national. To have written true blank verse during the despotism of the heroic couplet would have been impossible, and to appreciate Shaksperian or Miltonic melody was equally beyond the capacities of cultivated

taste. It was not until the spirit of the Elizabethan age revived in the authors of the commencement of the present century that blank verse began once more to be constructed upon proper principles, and to be accepted at its true value. Even then the habits of several generations had to be laboriously broken, and the metre which every playwright of the sixteenth century commanded with facility was used with pompous grandiosity or frigid baldness, by poets even of distinguished genius.

These remarks serve merely as a preface to the following attempt to analyse the structure of Miltonic blank verse, and to explain some of the mistakes which have been made about it. Johnson's essay on the versification of Milton proves the want of intelligence which prevailed in the last century, and shows to what extent the exclusive practice of the couplet had spoiled the ears of critics for all the deeper and more subtle strains of which our language is capable. Johnson lays it down as a fixed canon that the English ten-syllable iambic measure is only pure and regular 'when the accent rests upon every second syllable through the whole line.' Thus such lines as these—

His constant lamp, and waves his purple wings . . .
And mutual love, the crown of all our bliss, . . .

which are not of very common occurrence in Milton, and perhaps are never met with in succession, he admits as pure; while all the others—those, that is to say, in which we recognise the triumphs of Miltonic art—he condemns as 'more or less licentious with respect to accent.' The tender and pathetic cadence of the last line in the following passage—

This delicious place
For us too large, where thy abundance wants
Partakers, and uncropt falls to the ground,

is stigmatised by Johnson as remarkably inharmonious. Cowley's exquisite line—

And the soft wings of peace cover him round,

which exhibits a similar cadence, meets with the same condemnation, Johnson adding magisterially, with reference to both examples—'In these the law of metre is very grossly violated by mingling combinations of sound directly opposite to each other, as Milton expresses it in his sonnet to Henry Lawes, by committing short and

long, and setting one part of the measure at variance with the rest.' Johnson's ear, accustomed to the sing-song of the couplet, and his instinct sophisticated by a too exclusive study of classical metres, exacted an even flow of regular iambics, which might occasionally be broken, for the sake of variety, by lines confessedly discordant. A superfluous syllable at rare intervals, or a trochee instead of an iamb in the first place, would be enough, he thought, to satisfy human weakness petulantly craving after change ; then the metre should resume its calculated melody, and march on without interruption for a score or so of lines. But a trochee in the fourth place ! (for so he scanned the lines), O Milton and Cowley ! shame upon your ears ! The ferule was raised, and down it came with a swinging blow upon the knuckles of the poets who had neglected their prosody. Johnson need not be followed through the details of his analysis. The canon already quoted is enough to prove how far he was from having discerned the true principles of criticism in this case. He attempted to reduce blank verse to rule by setting up the standard of an ideal line, any deviation whatever from which was to be called 'licentious, impure, unharmonious,' remaining ignorant the while that the whole effect of this metre depends upon the massing of lines in periods and on the variety of complicated cadences. Among other things, he had not perhaps considered that the fourth place in a ten-syllabled iambic is not the same as the fourth place in a line of twelve syllables.

Todd, commenting on Johnson's essay, shows a truer appreciation of Miltonic melody, and is properly indignant with the cool arrogance of Aristarchus. But he, too, is far from having perceived the laws which determine the structure of blank verse. After observing that 'Milton was fond of the ancient measures,' which indeed is true, he goes on to settle some of the lines that puzzled Johnson, thus : 'These lines exhibit choriambics in the third and fourth, and in the fourth and fifth places :—

For us too large, whēre thÿ ābündance wants
Partakers, and uncropt fālls tō thē grōund.'

He thinks that he has answered Johnson and established something positive by his erudition *in re metricā*, whereas he has only attained the negative result of demonstrating that blank verse must not be considered a mere sequence of iambi. It does not really satisfy any one to be told that two-fifths of each of these lines is what

Horace might have called a choriambus, or that three-tenths of some other line is an anapæst. Johnson, to begin with, would not have been satisfied ; for he required iambs or their equivalents, and critics like Todd think nothing of scanning an anapæst in the place of one of Johnson's feet. Nor can the classical scholar be satisfied ; for, even granting that English metrical feet may be classified as tribrachs, dactyls, anapæsts, choriambics, and so forth, there is no classical precedent for versification which indiscriminately admitted all these kinds. The Greek comic metre is the only parallel of anything like closeness ; and, even there, limits were fixed beyond which the poet dared not venture. Such licences as Milton allowed himself in his sublime epic would have been inadmissible in the dialogue of the Frogs, and would have been utterly abhorrent to the laws of the Sophoclean Iambic. The unlearned English reader meanwhile will justly condemn this talk about anapæsts and choriambi as inappropriate. It cannot help him to perceive the melody of a line to be told 'here is a trochee,' or 'there I think I detect an amphibrach ;' for although these terms may usefully be employed between students accustomed to metrical analysis, they do not solve the problem of blank verse. With classical versification the case is different. Quantity determines every line : a long syllable is unmistakable, and invariably weighs as equal in the scale against two short ones. But nothing so definite can be established in English metre. What one man reads as a dactyl may seem like an anapæst or a tribrach to another. So little is our language subject to the laws of quantity, that to have produced four stanzas of decently correct English alcaics is one of the proudest *tours de force* of the most ingenious of our versifiers since Pope. Since therefore quantity forms no part at present of our prosody, and since the licences of quantity in blank verse can never have been determined, it is plainly not much to the purpose to talk about choriambus in Milton. They are undoubtedly to be found there. Our daily speech is larded with trochees and cretis and so forth. But these names of classic feet do not explain the secret of the varied melody of Milton. In order to show the uncertainty which attends the analysis of blank verse on these principles, it is enough to mention that Sir Egerton Brydges scans the line already quoted thus—

‘Pärtā | kërs, ānd | ūncrōpt | fälls tō thë | grōund,

‘first an iambic ; second, an iambic ; third, a spndee ; fourth, a

dactyl ; fifth, a demifoot.' He makes no mention of the choriamb, which seemed so evident to Todd, while Keightley, who has written learnedly in the same spirit, seems to reject spondees from his system.

Though the attempt to apply the phraseology of Greek and Latin prosody to the analysis of blank verse is not really satisfactory, yet the principle of substitution of other feet for iambs, asserted by Todd, Brydges, and Keightley, in opposition to Johnson, was a step forward. They defend Milton's irregularities by saying that in the place of two iambs he uses one choriambus, and that he employs trochees, anapæsts, and tribachs, under certain limitations, as freely as iambs. If these critics had advanced beyond the nomenclature of classic prosody, this principle of substitution would probably have led to a better understanding of the matter. English blank verse really consists of periods of lines, each one of which is made up normally of ten syllables, a stress or accent being thrown upon the final syllable in the line, so that the whole inclines to the iambic rather than to any other rhythm. The ten syllables are, also, if normally cadenced, so disposed that five beats occur in the verse at regular intervals. So far Johnson was right ; but he went wrong the instant he proceeded to declare that deviation from this ideal structure of the line produced an inharmonious result. In truth, it is precisely such deviation that constitutes the beauty of blank verse. When the metre was first practised by Surrey, Sackville, Greene, and Peele, great hesitation was displayed as to any departure from iambic regularity ; but Marlowe, the earliest poet of creative genius who applied himself to its cultivation, saw that in order to save the verse from monotony it was necessary to shift the accent, and, playing freely with feet properly so called, to be only careful to preserve the right proportions and masses of sound. A verse may often have more than ten syllables, and more or less than five accents ; but it must carry so much sound as shall be a satisfactory equivalent for ten syllables, and must have its accents so arranged as to content an ear prepared for five. There are thirteen syllables, and who shall exactly say how many accents, in this line ?—

Ruining along the illimitable inane ;

yet it quite fulfils the conditions of a good blank verse. The ponderous

Showers, hails, snows, frosts, and two-edged winds that prime,

which has perhaps seven accents, is as legitimate as the light and rapid—

Athens, the eye of Greece, mother of arts.

The secret of complex and melodious blank verse lies in preserving the balance and proportion of syllables, while varying their accent and their relative weight and volume, so that each line in a period shall carry its proper burden of sound, but the burden shall be differently distributed in the successive verses. This is done by sometimes allowing two syllables to take the time of one, and sometimes extending one syllable to the length of two, by forcing the accentuation of prominent monosyllables and gliding over successive liquid sounds, by packing one line with emphatic words so as to retard its movement, by winging another with light and hurried polysyllables, and by so adapting words to sense, and sense to rhythm, that pauses, prolongations, and accelerations, absolutely necessary for the understanding of the matter, evoke a cadence of apparently unstudied melody. In this prosody the bars of the musical composer, where different values from the breve to the demi-semiquaver find their place, suggest perhaps a truer basis of measurement than the longs and shorts of classic quantity. The following line from Milton ('Paradise Regained,' iii. 256)—

The one winding, the other straight, and left between,

affords a good instance of what is meant by the massing of sounds together, so as to produce a whole harmonious to the ear, but beyond the reach of satisfactory analysis by feet. It is not an Alexandrine, though, if we read it syllabically, it may be made to seem to have six feet. Two groups of syllables—

The one winding | the other straight |

take up the time of six syllables, and the verse falls at the end into the legitimate iambic cadence. At the same time it would no doubt be possible, by the application of a Procrustean method of elisions and forcible divisions, to reduce it to an inexact iambic, thus—

Th' one win | ding th' oth | er straight. |

This instance suggests the consideration of another point all-important in the prosody of blank verse. It is clear that in the line

just quoted the sense helps the sound, and leads the ear to mass the first eight syllables into the two groups requisite for the rhythm of the verse. And this is not only once or occasionally, but always and invariably the case in all blank verse composed with proper freedom. In this respect the metre is true to its original purpose. It was formed for the drama, where it had to be the plastic vehicle of every utterance, and where a perfectly elastic adaptation of the rhythm to the current of the sense was indispensable. The irregularities in its structure were the natural result of emphasis. This is illustrated by a line of Marlowe, as admirable for its energy of movement as for its imagery—

See where Christ's blood *streams* in the firmament.

That violent stress upon the verb was illegitimate according to iambic scansion ; but the verb required emphasis, and the verse gained rather than lost by the deviation from its even rise and fall. The one sound rule to be given to the readers of dramatic blank verse, written by a master of the art, is this—Attend strictly to the sense and to the pauses ; the lines will then be perfectly melodious ; but if you attempt to scan the lines on any preconceived metrical system, you will violate the sense and vitiate the music. Even the abstruse and fantastic audacities of Webster, who is the veriest Schumann of blank verse, melt into melody when subjected to this simple process. If one does but conceive the dramatic situation, sympathise with the passions of the speaker, allow for the natural inflections of his voice, mark his pauses, and interpolate his inarticulate exclamations, the whole apparently disjointed mass of words assumes a proper and majestic cadence. Milton took blank verse from the dramatists, and practised dramatic blank verse in ‘Comus ;’ nor in his epic did he depart from the rules of composition we have analysed. The movement of the sense invariably controlled the rhythm of the verse ; and most of his amorphous lines take form when treated as the products of dramatic art. The following, for example, is one of those that puzzled Johnson, although it is comparatively regular :—

'Tis true, I am that Spirit unfortunate.

Johnson, searching for iambs, had not gazed into the fallen Archangel's face—his disguise thrown off, his policy abandoned—nor heard the low slow accents of the two first syllables, the proud

emphasis upon the fourth, the stately and melancholy music-roll which closed the line. Yet, in order to understand the rhythm of the verse as the poet wrote it, it was necessary to have heard and seen the fiend as Milton heard and saw. The same may be said about the spasms of intense emotion which have to be imagined in order to give its metrical value to this verse—

Me, me only, just object of his ire.

It is obvious here that scansion by feet will be of little use, though we may grant that the line opens with a spondee followed by a trochee. Its intention is understood as soon as we allow the time of two whole syllables to the first emphatic *me*, and bring over the next words, *me only*, in the time of another two syllables, by doing which we give dramatic energy to the utterance. The truth of this method is still more evident when we take for analysis a verse from the eighth book of ‘Paradise Lost,’ at first sight singularly inharmonious:—

Submiss; he reared me, and, ‘Whom thou soughtest I am.’

Try to scan the line, and it seems a confusion of uncertain feet. Read it over by itself, and its packed consonants offend the ear. But now supply the context—

Rejoicing, but with awe,
In adoration at his feet I fell
Submiss; he reared me, and, ‘Whom thou soughtest I am,’
Said mildly, ‘Author of all this thou seest
Above, or round about thee, or beneath.’—P. L. viii. 319.

It is now seen that the word *submiss* belongs by the sense to the preceding period; the words, *he reared me*, are a parenthesis of quick and hurried narration; then another period commences. So dependent is sound on sense, and so inextricably linked together are the periods in a complex structure of blank verse. It not unfrequently happens that a portion at least of the sound belonging to a word at the commencement of a verse is owed to the cadence of the preceding lines, so that the strain of music which begins is wedded to that which dies, by indescribable and almost imperceptible interpenetrations. The rhythmic dance may therefore be prolonged through sequences and systems of melody, each perfect in itself, each owing and lending something to that which follows and

which went before, through concords and affinities of modulated sound.

Notwithstanding the pliancy of the method here suggested for the explanation of Miltonic verse, it is not easy to see the right rhythm of some few of his lines. The following present peculiar difficulties: since at first they seem like Alexandrines; and yet Milton's ear cannot be accused of letting an Alexandrine pass, nor again have they the right Alexandrine pause; while the striking similarity in the endings of these abnormal verses suggests at least some method in their irregularity:—

Imbued, bring to their sweetness no satiety.—P. L., viii. 216.

For solitude sometimes is best society.—P. L., ix. 249.

Such solitude before choicest society.—P. R., i. 302.

And linked itself by carnal sensuality.—‘Comus,’ 474.

The last instance, which is at once explained by pronouncing *sensual’ty* as if it had but three syllables, gives perhaps the key to the others. Though the English usage of words in *iety* precludes their elision to the extent required, we must imagine that Milton sometimes gave to such words as *satiety* and *society* the value of three syllables by treating the *ie* almost as if it were a diphthong. The words would then stand at the end of the lines, each forming a full foot, followed by the licensed redundant syllable. It must, however, be mentioned that, in ‘Paradise Lost’ at least, Milton does not often make use of the hendecasyllabic line, and also that in two instances (‘Paradise Lost,’ viii. 383, and ix. 1007) he uses *society* as a quadrisyllable. The ordinary way of explaining such lines is to say that they have two syllables redundant, which is of course a statement of the fact. But here a difficulty which often meets us in English scansion, owing to the different values given at different times to the same word, has to be faced. *Society* will play its part as two good feet in one line, and in another will have to do service as a single foot or its equivalent. The phenomenon is common enough in dramatic blank verse, where accelerated and vehement enunciation justifies it.

It may here be remarked that Milton's familiarity with what he calls the ‘various-measured verse’ of the ancient poets, and with the liquid numbers of the Italian hendecasyllable, determined, to some extent, his treatment of our blank verse. The variety of cadence and elaborate structure of Virgil’s hexameters no doubt incited him to emulation. He must have felt that the unincum-

bered eloquence, which is suited to the drama, where perspicuity is indispensable, would be out of place in the stationary and sonorous epic. Therefore, without seeking to reconstruct in English the metres of the ancients, he adapted the complex harmonies of the Roman poets to the qualities of our language. Like Virgil, he opened his paragraphs in the middle of a line, sustaining them through several clauses, till they reached their close in another hemistich at the distance of some half a dozen carefully conducted verses. His pauses, therefore, are of the greatest importance in regulating his music. From the Italians, again, he learned some secrets in the distribution of equivalent masses of sound. Milton's elisions, and other so-called irregularities, have affinities with the prosody of Dante : for while the normal Italian hendecasyllable runs thus—

Mo su, mo giù, e mo ricirculando,

the poet of the Inferno dares to write—

Bestemmiavano Iddio e i lor parenti;

which is an audacity on a level with many of Milton's.

Two elements of harmony in verse remain to be considered, each of which constitutes a large portion of Milton's music, and without which his pompous rhythm would often be hard and frigid. These are alliteration and assonance. Alliteration is the repetition of the same consonant at the beginning of words in a sentence. Assonance is the repetition of the same vowel in words which do not rhyme strictly. It is well known that the northern nations employed alliteration and not rhyme as the element of melody in poetry. The Vision of Piers Ploughman, for example, is written in a metre of which this is a specimen :—

In habit as a harmot unholy of works
Went wide in the world wonders to hear.

Assonance, again, is used by the Spanish poets in the place of the fuller rhyme required by our ear. Words like *pain* and *flare* are assonantal. The brief mention of these facts proves that alliteration and assonance can satisfy the craving for repeated sounds in poetry to which modern ears are subject ; since each of them has taken the place of rhyme in systematically cultivated literatures. It cannot be denied that the singsong jingle of the alliterative couplet just quoted is intolerable to an educated sense ; and it is on this account

that alliteration has fallen into general disrepute. Nothing is easier than to turn it to ridicule. When Shakspere, in ‘Love’s Labour’s Lost,’ made Master Holofernes say—

I will something affect the letter, for it argues facility;

The preyful princess pierced and pricked a pretty pleasing pricket,

he threw contempt upon the vulgar and illiterate abusers of an ornament they did not understand. Nothing, again, is easier than to make verses that skip or hobble on alliterative crutches. Our ears are wearied with periods like the following:—

Creeps through a throbbing light that grows and glows
From glare to greater glare, until it gluts,
And gulfs him in.

Yet in spite of all this the lofty muse of Milton owes no small portion of her charm to this adornment. In order to understand the Miltonic use of alliteration, it must be remarked that the faults of the verses just quoted are due to the alliteration being forced upon the ear. It is loud and strident, not flattering the sense by delicate suggestion and subtle echoes of recurring sound, but taking it by storm and strumming, as it were, relentlessly upon one nerve. In good alliterative structures the letters chime in at intervals: two or three consonantal sounds are started together, and their recurrences are interwoven like the rhymes in *terza rima*. Here is an instance—

Far off from these a slow and silent stream,
Lethe, the river of oblivion, rolls
Her watery labyrinth, whereof who drinks
Forthwith his former state and being forgets,
Forgets both joy and grief, pleasure and pain.—P. L. ii. 582.

Here the letters *f* and *l* predominate; but they are assisted by alliterations of *s* and *r* and *w* and *g*. Next, it may be shown that really melodious alliteration owes much to medial and final as well as to initial consonants, and also to the admixture of cognate letters, such as *p* or *t* in structures where *b* or *d* predominate. The first of these points is illustrated by a strongly alliterative passage in ‘Paradise Lost’ (v. 322), where, however, it must be admitted that Milton has erred into alliterative monotony:—

Small store will serve, where store,
All seasons, ripe for use hangs on the stalk;
Save what by frugal storing firmness gains
To nourish, and superfluous moist consumes.

It will here be noticed that the sibilants, wherever they occur, whether at the beginning, the middle, or the end of the words, are felt. It is rare to find a structure of repeated *s* in Milton.¹ Some letters lend themselves more than others to harmonious alliteration, and Milton shows decided preference for *f*, *l*, *m*, *r*, and *w*. *D* and *h* are letters which he uses not always with melodious effect, as in the following passage:—

But, lest his heart exalt him in the harm
Already done, to have dispeopled heaven,
My damage fondly deemed, I can repair
That detriment.—P. L., vii. 150.

We may compare, with the two examples just given, those in which mere liquid sounds are employed, even though profusely, so as to observe how far more delicate is the music of the verse. Here is a sequence of *f* and *l*—

Fairer than feigned of old, or fabled since
Of faery damsels, met in forests wide
By knights of Logres, or of Lyones,
Lancelot or Pelleas or Pellenore.—P. R., ii. 358.

Here is one in which *w* predominates:—

Sails between worlds and worlds with steady wing,
Now on the polar winds, then with quick fan
Winnows the buxom air; till within soar
Of towering eagles to all the fowls he seems
A phoenix.—P. L., v. 268.

Three other instances of very marked alliteration may be pointed out, to prove the frequency of repeated sounds which Milton sometimes allowed himself. They are as follows:—

War wearied hath performed what war can do,
And to disordered rage let loose the reins,
With mountains as with weapons armed, which makes
Wild work in heaven and dangerous to the main.

P. L., vi. 695

But drive far off the barbarous dissonance
Of Bacchus and his revellers, the race
Of that wild rout that tore the Thracian bard
In Rhodopé, where woods and rocks had ears
To rapture.—P. L., vii. 32.

¹ See, however, P. L., vii. 295.

Moon that now meetest the orient sun, now fliest,
 With the fixed stars, fixed in their orb that flies ;
 And ye five other wandering fires, that move
 In mystic dance not without song.—P. L., v. 175.

To these may be added ‘Paradise Lost,’ vi. 37–55, a fine instance of interlinked alliterations, *f, r, l, m, p, b*, determining the structure ; while in ‘Paradise Lost’ (vi. 386–405) we find a similar system of *d, f, r, p, v*. The famous passage at the end of the fifth book, which describes the retirement of Abdiel from the rebel army, exhibits splendid alliterative qualities in combination with Milton’s favourite sequence of adjectives beginning with *un*.

Another point, besides the interlacement of sounds and intervention of subsidiary letters, which have been already mentioned, characterises the alliteration of Milton. He confines his alliterative systems to periods of sense and metrical construction. When the period is closed, and the thought which it conveys has been expressed, the predominant letter is dropped. Thus there subsists an intimate connection between the metrical melody and the alliterative harmony, both aiding the rhetorical development of the sense. It consequently often happens that the alliteration is descriptive or picturesque, as in the lines about the Parthian bowmen—

Flying behind them shot
 Sharp sleet of arrowy showers against the face
 Of their pursuers.—P. R. iii. 323.—(Compare P. L., vi. 211–213.)

The descriptive pomp of the alliterative system is more remarkable in the passage where Raphael relates the division of earth from water—

Immediately the mountains huge appear,
 Emergent, and their broad bare backs upheave
 Into the clouds ; their tops ascend the sky,
 So high as heaved the tumid hills, so low
 Down sunk a hollow bottom, broad and deep,
 Capacious bed of waters. Thither they
 Hasted with glad precipitance, up-rolled,
 As drops on dust conglobing, from the dry ;
 Part rise in crystal wall, or ridge direct,
 For haste ; such flight the great command impressed
 On the swift floods. As armies at the call
 Of trumpet—for of armies thou hast heard—
 Troop to their standard, so the watery throng,

Wave rolling after wave, where way they found ;
 If steep, with torrent rapture, if through plain,
 Soft-ebbing : nor withstood them rock or hill ;
 But they, or underground, or circuit wide
 With serpent error wandering, found their way,
 And on the washy ooze deep channels wore.

P. L. vii. 285-303.

Here the letters *b* and *h*, not inaptly, mark the firmness and resistance of the earth, while *w* and *r* depict the liquid lapse of waters.

Enough, perhaps, has now been said to prove that the harmony of Milton's verse depends very greatly upon alliteration ; and here it may be observed that he not unfrequently repeats the same word, as much with a view to the recurrence of sound, as with a rhetorical intention. In 'Paradise Regained' (iii. 109) there is a period of twelve lines in which we find the word *glory* eight times repeated, and the alliteration strengthened by five subsidiary *g*'s. At the 205th line of the same book, there is a period of six verses containing *worse* five times, supported by three subsidiary *w*'s. In each of these cases the repetition is of course rhetorically studied. A very remarkable instance of the grandeur resulting from simple reiteration is the following :—

If I foreknew,
 Foreknowledge had no influence on their fault ;
 Which had no less proved certain unforeknown.—P. L. iii. 117.

The assonance of various forms of the *o* sound adds to the volume of the music in these lines.

Assonance, though not so obvious as alliteration, is no less potent. Of its place in Milton's versification something must be said.¹ To begin with, the poet was himself very sensitive to the harmony of vowel sounds when well pronounced. In his Epistle to Master Hartlib, he lays it down as a rule that, in the education of youths, 'their speech is to be fashioned to a distinct and clear pronunciation, as near as may be to the Italian, especially in the vowels. For we Englishmen, being far northerly, do not open our mouths in the cold air wide enough to grace a southern tongue,'

¹ This also would be the place to discuss the occasional rhymes found in Milton's blank verse. P. L. xi. 853-860 has no less than six assonantal endings. See, too, P. L. iv. 957. P. L. i. 612.

&c. His blank verse abounds in open-mouthed, deep-chested *a's* and *o's*. Here is a passage in which their assonance is all the more remarkable from the absence of alliteration—

Say, Goddess, what ensued when Raphael,
The affable Archangel, had forewarned
Adam, by dire example, to beware
Apostasy, by what befell in Heaven
To those apostates; lest the like befall
In Paradise to Adam or his race,
Charged not to touch the interdicted tree, &c.—P. L., vii. 40.

The opening lines of Book ii., the passage about Mulciber at the end of Book i., and the great symphonious period which describes the movement of the fallen angels ‘to the Dorian mood of flutes and soft recorders,’ all serve to illustrate the gorgeousness of Milton’s assonance. In attempting to characterise the effect of these deep-toned vowels, it is almost necessary to borrow words from the art of colours, since what colours are to painting vowels are to verse. It would seem, after drinking in draught after draught of these intoxicating melodies, as if Milton with unerring tact had selected from the English language only such words as are pompous, full-sounding, capable of being wrought into the liquid architecture of articulate music. Discord, who is so busy in the lines of even mighty poets, stands apart and keeps silence here. That tenuity of sound and want of volume from which the periods of otherwise great versifiers occasionally suffer, never occurs in Milton. Like Virgil he is unerringly and unremittingly harmonious. Music is the element in which his genius lives, just as light is the element of Pindar, or as darkness covers the ‘Inferno’ like a pall.

Having attempted an analysis of the melody of Milton’s blank verse, it remains to speak about the changes which may be traced in it from the date of ‘Comus’ to that of ‘Samson Agonistes.’ ‘Comus,’ as might have been expected both from the time of its composition and its form, is the one of Milton’s masterpieces in which he has adhered most closely to the traditions of the Elizabethan drama. His style, it is true, is already more complex and peculiarly harmonious, more characteristically Miltonic, than that of any of the dramatists. Yet there are passages in Comus which remind us forcibly of Fletcher. Others, like the following—

How sweetly did they float upon the wings
Of silence, through the empty vaulted night !
At every fall smoothing the raven down
Of darkness till it smiled,

might have been written by Shakspere. Alliteration is used freely, but more after the manner of Fletcher or of Spenser, not with the sustained elaboration of Milton's maturity. The truly Miltonic licences are rare: we find fewer inverted sentences, less lengthy systems of concatenated periods,—in a word, a more fluent and simpler versification. Both in the imagery and the melody of 'Comus' there is youthful freshness, an almost wanton display of vernal bloom and beauty. In the 'Paradise Lost' we reach the manhood of the art of Milton. His elaborate metrical structure, supported by rich alliteration and assonance, here attains its full development. Already too there is more of rugged and abrupt sublimity in the blank verse of the 'Paradise Lost' than can be found in that of 'Comus.' The metre, learned in the school of the Elizabethan drama, is being used in accordance with the models of the Roman Epic. Yet the fancy of the poet has not yet grown chill or lost luxuriance, nor has his ear become less sensitive to every musical modulation of which our language is capable. 'Paradise Regained' presents a marked change. Except in descriptive passages, there is but little alliterative melody; while all the harsh inversions and rugged eccentricities of abnormally constructed verses are retained. It is noticeable that hendecasyllabic lines, which are but sparingly used in 'Paradise Lost,' only two occurring in the first book, become frequent in 'Paradise Regained,' and add considerably to the heaviness of its movement. These, for example, are found within a short space in the first book :—

One day forth walked alone, the Spirit leading. . . .
Awakened in me swarm, while I consider. . . .
These gnawing thoughts my mother soon perceiving. . . .
A star not seen before in heaven appearing. . . .

No doubt there are admirers of Milton who would not allow that the metrical changes in 'Paradise Regained' are for the worse. Yet it is hardly to be denied that, in comparison with the 'Paradise Lost,' much of richness, variety, sonorousness, and liquid melody has been sacrificed. 'Samson Agonistes' is a step beyond 'Paradise Regained' in dryness, ruggedness, and uncompromising severity.

The blank verse is shorn of alliterative and assonantal harmony, except in the last speech of Manoah, and in a few of the more pensive passages scattered up and down the drama. Still it displays every form of the true Miltonic meter in so far as audacities of accent and accumulations of compacted syllables are concerned. To the lover of the most exalted poetry, 'Samson Agonistes,' even as regards its versification, may possibly offer a pleasure more subtle and more rare than 'Paradise Lost,' with all its full-toned harmonies. It has the grandeur of a play of Sophocles which, after passing through the medium of the Latin genius, has been committed to English by the loftiest of modern poets in austere old age. 'Comus' shows the style of the master in his earliest manhood, with the luxuriance of an untamed youth, the labyrinthine blossoms of an unpruned fancy. 'Paradise Lost' exhibits the same richness, mellowed by age and subordinated to the laws of abstruse and deeply studied proportion. In 'Paradise Regained' the master has grown older, and his taste is more severe. In 'Samson Agonistes' colour and melody have lost their charm for him, though he preserves his mighty style, restraining it within limits prescribed by a taste ascetically grave. In 'Comus' we have the glowing hues of a Giorgione, with a comparatively weak design. In 'Paradise Lost' the design of a Michelangelo is added to the colouring of a Titian. In 'Paradise Regained' both colour and design are of the great Florentine. In 'Samson Agonistes' the design is still that of Michelangelo; but the picture is executed *en grisaille*, in severest chiaroscuro, careful only of the form. Fortunately we know the dates of Milton's masterpieces. There is therefore no uncertainty or subjectivity of criticism in the analysis of these changes in his manner; at the same time they are precisely what we might have expected *a priori*—the intellectual gaining on the sensual qualities of art as the poet advanced in age.

NOTE ON THE 'ORFEO.'

See p. 242.

POLIZIANO's 'Orfeo' was dedicated to Messer Carlo Canale, the husband of that famous Vannozza who bore Lucrezia and Cesare Borgia to Alexander VI. As first published in 1494, and as republished from time to time up to the year 1776, it carried the title of 'La Favola di Orfeo,' and was not divided into acts. Frequent stage-directions sufficed, as in the case of Florentine 'Sacre Rappresentazioni,' for the indication of the scenes. In this earliest redaction of the 'Orfeo' the chorus of the Dryads, the part of Mnesillus, the lyrical speeches of Proserpine and Pluto, and the first lyric of the Mænads are either omitted or represented by passages in *ottava rima*. In the year 1776, the Padre Ireneo Affò printed at Venice a new version of 'Orfeo, Tragedia di Messer Angelo Poliziano,' collated by him from two MSS. This play is divided into five acts, severally entitled 'Pastoricus,' 'Nymphas Habet,' 'Heroicus,' 'Necromanticus,' and 'Bacchanalis.' The stage-directions are given partly in Latin, partly in Italian; and instead of the 'Announcement of the Feast' by Mercury, a prologue consisting of two octave stanzas is appended. A Latin Sapphic ode in praise of the Cardinal Gonzaga, which was interpolated in the first version, is omitted, and certain changes are made in the last soliloquy of Orpheus. There is little doubt, I think, that the second version, first given to the press by the Padre Affò, was Poliziano's own recension of his earlier composition. I have, therefore, followed it in the main, except that I have not thought it necessary to observe the somewhat pedantic division into acts, and have preferred to use the original 'Announcement of the Feast,' which proves the integral connection between this ancient secular play and the Florentine Mystery or 'Sacra Rappresentazione.' The last soliloquy of Orpheus, again, has been freely translated by me

from both versions for reasons which will be obvious to students of the original. I have yet to make a remark upon one detail of my translation. In line 390 (part of the first lyric of the Mænads), the Italian gives us :—

Spezzata come il fabbro il cribro spezza.

This means literally : ‘Riven as a blacksmith rives a sieve or boulter.’ Now sieves are made in Tuscany of a plate of iron, pierced with holes ; and the image would therefore be familiar to an Italian. I have, however, preferred to translate thus :—

Riven as woodmen firtrees rive,

instead of giving :—

Riven as blacksmiths boulters rive,

because I thought that the second and faithful version would be unintelligible as well as unpoetical for English readers.

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